

**HOME CELLS: A NEW TESTAMENT
MODEL FOR CHURCH GROWTH**

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of the Requirements for the Degree
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**by
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

Homes Cells: A New Testament Model For Church Growth

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This research attempts an evaluation of the traditional church as it relates to the New Testament model of church growth. Since one's theology of God gives birth to one's methodology, it is most important that methods of church growth are based on clear biblical models.

When one looks honestly at the New Testament church and the traditional church structures as they exist today, the problem arises that the two churches are analyzed by contrast and not comparisons. The challenge then arises to confront those differences and to seek possible steps to bring the traditional church back in line with the early church. One of the problems facing the traditional church today is her emphasis on Program Base Models. These models come into direct confrontation with the People Base Models of the New Testament.

An attempt is made to look at the early church through the model of home cells. Since the church is the *ekklesia* of God, it must be looked at not in terms of a building, but as a community of people who are involved in building koinonia. Koinonia takes place in a very intimate and small group.

This study also challenges the homogeneous unit principle of church growth which goes against the New Testament model of community. Since Christ is the head of the Church, He is involved in establishing a new homogeneous unit of people from every nation, race, and people. It is in the early church that God creates a new

family that goes against all barriers of caste, class, and race.

A case study involves the Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea and how that church has experienced rapid growth by using the New Testament model of home cells. Three other models of church growth are presented: the Women-church model, the African-American church model, and the Latin American model. Each subsequent model is critiqued with a suggested model of expansion.

The study concludes with a suggested challenge to the people of God to consider making a change back to the New Testament model. The home cell concept is presented as a suggested alternative to do ministry under the influence of the Holy Spirit as the church strives to fulfill the great commission.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction	1
Thesis	2
Major Terms	3
Purpose of the Study	9
Method and Procedures.	11
2. Theological Perspectives The Nature of the Church	14
The Church: A Loving Community	14
A Chosen People	16
God's Church Is One Church	17
The Purpose of Unity	18
Church Unity versus the Homogeneous Unit Principles.	25
3. The Early Church The New Testament Model for Community	28
The Early Church	29
The Body of Christ	31
The Home Ministry of Jesus	32
Results of House Churches	34
Building Community	37
Community in the New Testament	39
Jesus Penetrated Oikoses	44
The Early Church Penetrated Oikoses	46
4. Home Cell Ministry A Report of the Yoido Full Gospel Church	48
Prayer and Church Growth: Step One	50
The Holy Spirit and Church Growth: Step Two	57
The Message and Church Growth: Step Three	59
Home Cells and Church Growth: Step Four	62
5. Contextualization and Church Growth.	68
Women-Church Model	70
African-American Model	77
Latin-American Model	84
Critique and Reflections	91

Table of Contents (con't.)

Chapter	Page
6. Home Cells in Perspective: Summary and Conclusion	100
Appendixes	
A. A Sample Syllabus of the Ephesus Seventh-Day Adventist Church's Home Cell Program	110
B. A Ten Year Survey of The Growth of the Ephesus Seventh-Day Adventist Church	134
Bibliography	136

Introduction

The church growth movement must inevitably examine the lifestyle of traditional church structures and discover that there is a great need for reform and revitalization. The imperative for the church today is to get back to the New Testament model of ministry.

This project seeks to use the church in the New Testament as a yardstick to evaluate today's congregations. In so doing, it will see how far it has strayed from where it started. This study will also discuss the problems that confront the church when it comes up with models for church growth without strong biblical mandate. In particular, it will be necessary to take another look at the homogeneous unit principle which was espoused by Donald McGavran and compare this model with the biblical model for church growth.

Since one's theology of the church normally gives birth to one's methodology for establishing models for church growth, it would be prudent to have a clear understanding of the early church and her mission. In brief, a faulty theology gives birth to a crippled missiology.

Every revival of dynamic Christianity has been due to a rediscovery or re-emphasis of the pure christianity of the first century. Like a river which is poured at its source, Christianity flowed from Jesus Christ to the Apostles and from them to the first century Christians, but it was barely underway when influences from other sources began to color the waters. The further from the source the river flowed, the

more it changed and the more polluted it became through these influences.

Concerning this partial revival, William McBirnie asserts:

From time to time reformers have said, "Let's go back to the Source and begin anew." Often, however, they have unconsciously carried some of the unchristian pollution of their churches back with them. Few were really objective, few could detach themselves from the strong and prejudiced personalities of leaders, the influence of existing culture, politics, or religious custom. Later, most reformations or restoration movements have been only partial in their return to the source. Frequently, compromise has seemed necessary.¹

Thesis

This project undertakes to assess the effectiveness of Home Cell groups in the process of creating Christian communities for nurture and growth. This new life form that is known as the cell system, is sweeping the nation with a breath of fresh air. Replacing old models of church growth that lack substance and meaning. This home cell system, which is as old as the New Testament church, is one of the major factors in the spread of the gospel among the fastest growing churches of the world.² Why home cell groups? The traditional models of church growth and leadership simply do not work on a large scale, but the New Testament model when followed closely, will work as it has in a case study of the Yoido Full Gospel Church of Seoul, Korea. Paul Yonggi Cho has a membership of over 600,000 members, and this is largely because of the success he has experienced with the Home Cell system. After analyzing his church for over five years, it would be appropriate to take a close look

¹William Steuart McBirnie, The Search for the Early Church (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1978), 17.

²John N. Vaughan, The World's Twenty Largest Churches (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 20.

at factors attributing to this growth. It will later be proposed that through the Home Cell system, Christ is establishing a new homogeneous unit of people from every nation, race, and people. It is in this model that the church of Jesus Christ creates a new family that goes against all barriers of caste, class, sex and race. Throughout the entire New Testament the oneness of the people of God, the oneness that transcends all outward distinctions, is taken for granted. The thought is that with the coming of Jesus Christ all barriers that divide humankind have been broken down, and a new community is being shaped on and through these Home Cells. God's purpose in Jesus Christ includes community, and that community becomes visible in the church.

Major Terms

HOME CELLS: This refers to a group of people numbering no more than fifteen who meet on a regular basis to nurture and minister to each other in a home setting. They also set goals for community outreach and care.³

HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE: This term was coined by Donald McGavran to say that "men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers."⁴

OIKOS: This term is used to refer to the basic building block of community life. It is usually translated "household" in the New Testament.⁵ A later chapter will

³Kurt Johnson, Small Group Outreach (Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald, 1991), 26.

⁴Donald McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 193.

⁵Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr., Building Bridges, Opening Hearts (Houston: Touch Outreach. 1991). 16.

fully develop its importance to cell group life.

EKKLESIA: This term is used to designate a meeting of Christians for worship; *ekklesia* can best be rendered simply "church." This does not mean a building called a church. It is the assembling of the community of faith for worship. Whether it takes place in a house or a hall is of no special significance.⁶

KOINONIA: This is referred to as one of the fundamental practices of the primitive ecclesia. This is the New Testament term for fellowship which finds its meaning in intimate Home Cells.⁷

OIKONOMOS: This was the servant in the *oikos* who was assigned the oversight of physical needs within the household. In modern terms, he might be considered a deacon.⁸ The writer will enlarge this meaning to incorporate the servant leader in Home Cells.

One would have to do much research in order to find materials that deal with the Home Cell concept. Perhaps this is due to the enormous amount of material that has been developed in support of the Church Growth theory. Paul Yonggi Cho has written quite a few books that deal with this concept, however, he is not considered a church growth theologian. This leads one to affirm that the term Church Growth should not be taken to mean that it is synonymous with the activity of the Holy Spirit

⁶George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 536.

⁷Ibid., 543.

⁸Neighbour, Building Bridges, 18.

as she works in the church to train disciples for mission. Church growth is not a term that has been voiced by the Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. This term is as old as time and finds its beginning in the mind of God. Church growth then is not something you do, but rather what the Spirit does through you. Consequently, when this term is used in this project, it will deal most specifically with the results of the Spirit when his/her servants follow the model of New Testament growth.

Therefore, one will have to rely on the experience of a practitioner (Paul Y. Cho) and the Word of God. Careful consideration will be given to the biblical definition of church growth as it pertains to the early Church of Acts.

It is not necessary to go over any new ground in the recent debates over the homogeneous unit principle. This project is more interested in looking at the Home Cell principles of the New Testament Church and how McGavran's principle would hold up to this model. McGavran's views were rebutted by several theologians and clergy within the World Council of Churches as being a phenomenon that lacks a clear biblical basis for existence. J. G. Davies, professor of theology at the University of Birmingham, England, offered the sharpest critique of church growth.⁹ He began with the question, "What is the Church?" He characterized the Church as one church, not many, and as "open-minded, dynamic, outward moving, concerned with the world, etc."¹⁰ With such a view of the Church he could not speak of

⁹John Gordon Davies, "Church Growth: A Critique," International Review of Missions 57 (1968: 291-97; reprinted in The Conciliar-Evangelical Debate: The Crucial Documents, 1964-1976. 128-35, ed. by Donald Anderson McGavran (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library), 1977.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 130.

church growth for the following reasons:

1. To define the goal of mission as church growth is to indulge in an ecclesiastical narrowing of the concept of the Kingdom of God.
2. To think in terms of church growth is to plan for survival, and this is the antithesis of the pattern of life laid down for us by Christ.
3. The strategy of deliberately planned church growth is a limitation of the free activity of the Holy Spirit
4. To place church growth at the center of Christian concern is an illegitimate goal because, as the New Testament makes quite plain, God's concern, which presumably the Christian should share, is the world and not the Church. The Church is an instrument, but not the only one, of God's action for and in the world; it is therefore not an end in itself, and to regard it as such is to turn ecclesiology into ecclesiology.

Against McGavran he defended the concept of worship as mission. Mission, according to Davies, is a divine movement in which the church is to be involved. Worship is the commemoration of God's past deeds and the celebration of His present acts. It is thus participation in God's mission.¹¹

The next serious exchange in church growth dialogue had to deal with McGavran's view on the homogeneous unit principle and the views of Victor

¹¹Ibid., 204.

Hayward.¹² Hayward took issue with McGavran's affirmation that "men like to become Christians without crossing linguistic, racial or class barriers." Said Hayward, "Of course they do--because they can then evade the challenge of the Gospel and of the Christian Church just where it becomes most real, most painful and most meaningful!"¹³

The New Testament teaches that "the crucial application of the Gospel to the Christian community was precisely the crossing of the racial barrier, and the demonstration (which was not what either Jews or Gentiles liked) that in Christ, Jew and Gentile were made one."¹⁴ It was in the power of the Gospel to overcome class and racial barriers that the Early Church grew. Thus, Hayward concluded, "Your enthusiasm for numerical growth has, I regretfully assert, led you to deny the very essence of the nature of the Church."¹⁵

McGavran responded by inquiring how people are accepted into the church. Can crossing racial or class barriers be made a requirement for Baptism? He said, "I do not find in the Bible anything which would justify anyone in requiring a particular degree of brotherly behavior as a prerequisite for baptism."¹⁶ He continued,

¹²Victor E. W. Hayward and Donald Anderson McGavran, "Without Crossing Barriers? One in Christ vs discipling Diverse Cultures, "Missiology 2 (1974): 203-04.

¹³Ibid., 204.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 204-05.

¹⁶Ibid., 212.

"Indeed, to require men of other cultures to obey our convictions is the essence of paternalism."¹⁷ It is their responsibility to search the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to determine what God would have them to do. "Otherwise they are obeying men, not God."¹⁸

In his summary of their exchange, Hayward acknowledged McGavran's first point. "We agree that, according to Biblical doctrine, salvation in Christ is offered to individuals, is granted by grace alone, and is to be appropriated solely by faith."¹⁹ But that is not all there is to be said on the matter. Hayward stressed that, "on the same Biblical basis, the acceptance of salvation means ipso facto incorporation into the Body of Christ, a reconciled and reconciling universal community which God has called into being as a foretaste and instrument of His saving purpose for mankind."²⁰ Thus the baptized member is inevitably caught up in the meaning and purpose of the Body into which he was incorporated. He must put his loyalty to Christ before all others and his membership in the Church before family, class, nation, or race. Hayward concluded, "In my view, it does not matter if local congregations represent only one class or race because this is how they have naturally grown, provided the significance of the Church's universal nature is taught and understood; but it involves a betrayal of the Gospel and the Church, if they are deliberately formed of one race,

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 220.

²⁰Ibid.

tribe, sub-tribe, caste or clan, when the composition of their membership could have been broader, but was deliberately limited."²¹

In North America the principle was criticized on biblical grounds as denying the universal church. With volumes of dissertations already printed on this debate, it is not my purpose to re-invent the wheel in this project. It is only the desire of this writer to produce evidence that real church growth occurs when we follow the New Testament model for *ekklesia*. In spite of the current debate that exists between the conservative and the evangelical churches regarding the church growth issue, this matter has not yet come to any definitive agreement.

My thesis in this situation would be presented to challenge both schools of thought to consider an alternative option—one that would challenge them to compare their models to the biblical one. When this is done, it will then become evident after looking at the scriptural text and studying the fastest growing church in the world that genuine church growth takes place when one goes back to Bible Basics.

Purpose of the Study

This project intends to show that lasting church growth is not dependent on anthropological, sociological, or statistical data. It is the work of the Spirit that makes churches grow and they grow in quality and quantity on a larger scale under the Home Cell concept. This concept will show how lasting community and nurture can be realized in a more intimate and caring setting as Home Cells. This Home Cell concept is not only interested in enlarging the church, but it is also concerned about

²¹Ibid., 221.

the quality of the church and its fellowship. With the great explosions of the mega-churches being established around the country and the establishing of celebration churches, it is very important to realize the need of personal care in such a large atmosphere.

In *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck writes: "If we are to use the word community meaningfully, we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, and make others conditions our own. In the Kingdoms of this world shaped by Satan, Christian community cannot exist. Only in the 'Kingdom of God' can it be truly discovered."²² When Jesus went about announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom, He was inviting fragmented humanity to enter into something it couldn't experience elsewhere. The primary reason for the development of cells is to build Christian communities. A community in which people find their identity in Jesus Christ instead of their race, culture, or socio-economic status. The Unifier is Christ in this new community and the unifying principle is the Gospel. Since we do not live in a homogeneous society, it is important to realize that our concept of church growth must be cross-cultural in nature.

The breaking down of the barriers between Jew and Gentile, between slave and free, and between male and female could no more be taken for granted in the first

²²M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 59.

century than the breaking of barriers between black and white, between rich and poor, and between male and female today, but all the New Testament evidence points to an apostolic practice consistent with the aim of forming churches in which God's purpose would become a concrete reality.

In short, we will find out in the case of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, that their growth is almost attributable to their stern dependence in following the New Testament model of church growth. We shall also argue that this congregation is not growing at a tremendous rate because of some man-made theory, but because of deep commitment to the biblical principle of community which is nourished in the atmosphere of the Home Cells.

Since one's theology of the church gives them their patterns for methodology, it is most important that we present clear definitions of the church and its missions. When one reads the biblical text without any preconceived ideas of church growth they will go away with a most intimate understanding that God called the church a body for specific reasons. We will explore some of the metaphors that are used to describe the church to help us come to a clearer perception of how He would have this mission carried forth to a fragmented world.

Method and Procedures

This research spans five years of field study in Seoul, Korea at the Yoido Full Gospel Church. It involves personal interviews with Paul Yonggi Cho, along with his personal secretary, Lydia M. Swain, who have given me permission to incorporate my interviews with them in this text. The research for this paper began at the School

of Theology at Claremont Library and came to fruition at the Union Theological Library in New York City. All Bible references in the text are from the King James Version. The chapter outline for each succeeding chapter goes as listed.

Chapter 2 focuses on the theology of the church with specific interest to the term *ekklesia*. It will explore the definition of the church with some usages of metaphors. This Chapter is most important as stated earlier to stress the priority of having a correct or biblical theology of the church before one can establish a methodology in which to operate.

Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of building Home Cells on the principle of *oikos*, since Chapter 2 sets forth in establishing the fact that *ekklesia* has to do more with people, than a building. Chapter 3 shows how these communities were established in a New Testament context to aid in the growth of the Church. This Chapter will challenge the homogeneous unit principle as a barrier to establishing true Koinonia and Oikos.

Chapter 4 takes a practical look at a case study of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea. This is at present the largest church in the world. It will be necessary to compare their methodology in using Home Cells with the New Testament Church concept of community. One will notice that there are striking biblical patterns both churches have in common. It will also hold up to this model in Korea, the current church growth model of growth.

Chapter 5 asserts the importance of doing ministry in the context of those being ministered unto. Since Chapter 4 takes a practical look at a model for church

growth espoused by the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea. This chapter will critique the former model by presenting three different models and how they are used for ministry. Emphasis will be given on how home cells can be contextualized in the African-American Tradition of worship and ministry.

Chapter 6 summarizes the data and makes conclusion regarding its outcome. In this chapter it is my intention to reflect on the entire project and to present recommendations and concerns regarding the project. It is only fair to admit that the writer claims no expertise in this field, but seeks only to ask questions to stir up discussion on this Home Cells system issue.

The Appendixes of this project include a ten-year analysis of the Ephesus Seventh-Day Adventist Church along with a manual that was used in establishing Home Cells in the Los Angeles area. The manual is very important for this project because it talks about the challenges of this church and how they experienced growth by following the same principles of Paul Yonggi Cho and the New Testament Church.

CHAPTER 2

Theological Perspectives: The Nature of the Church

The Church: A Loving Community

The church is a loving body of confessed believers joining together for worship, fellowship, community, nurture, and evangelism; led in their efforts by pastors and deacons; sovereign in polity, and including, as a part of its life and ministry, observance of the ordinances, discipline, and mutual edification.

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book entitled The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry asserts, "Without a definition of Church it is impossible to define adequately the work of the ministry....¹ Since theology gives birth to methodology, it is very crucial that one has a clear definition of the church and its mission in the world today. It is often the absence of a clear theological mandate based on a biblical model that leads to faulty conclusions in regards to the mission of the church. Therefore, it is the purpose of this writer to explore the meaning and purpose of the church as God's agent in the proliferation of the gospel. The theology of the church can best be explained by analyzing Paul's use of the word *ekklesia*. The word in its ancient setting can designate an assembly gathered as a political body (Acts 19:39) or an assembly as such (Acts 19:32, 39). However, in Paul the background of the word is the Old Testament use of *ekklesia* of Israel as the people of God.

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 18.

Implicit in the word is the claim that the church stands in direct continuity with the Old Testament people of God. Regarding this term *ekklesia*, John Stott asserts that *ekklesia* can designate a meeting of Christians for worship, however, it does not mean a building called a church. *Ekklesia* is never used to mean a "building" as in the English word "church." It is the assembling of the saints for worship. As such, *ekklesia* can refer to believers who gather in a particular home as a house-church (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2). It can also designate the totality of believers living in one place—in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), Laodicea (Col. 4:16), or in the cities of Judaea (Gal. 1:22) and Galatia (Gal. 1:2).²

In reference to the usage of *ekklesia*, Peter C. Hodgson articulated: "Originally the new community was nameless, but within a few years, it had established its identity not simply as a network of *ekklesia* (assemblies); but as the *ekklesia tou theou** (ecclia of God) gathered in the name of Jesus Christ."³

The very usage of *ekklesia* is suggestive of Paul's concept of the church.⁴ The local congregation is the church; the sum of all believers is the church. This leads to the conclusion that the church is not conceived of numerically but organically. The church universal is not thought of as the totality of all the local churches; rather, each community, however small, represents the total community, the church. The local church is not part of the church but is the church in its local

²John Stott, One People (London: Falcon Books, 1969), 17.

³Peter C. Hodgson, Revisioning the Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 25.

⁴Stott, One People, 21.

expression. This affirms that the whole power of God is available to every local congregation, that each congregation functions in its community as the universal church functions in the world as a whole, and that the local congregation is no isolated group but stands in a state of solidarity with the church as a whole.

A Chosen People

The church is a people, a community of people, who owe their existence to God. The church is that group of people who owe their solidarity and their corporate distinctness from other communities to one thing only - the call of God.⁵ Henry H. Barnette emphasizes the importance of this call by asserting:

This call from God should not give them a feeling of superiority. This call should not give a sense of exclusiveness. This is a call to join God in the world by sharing the Love of God to the world. This is a call to service. A call to make this a better world in which to live. God has the power to call and choose. This power comes from God and God has the right to call whomever he/she chooses. At times God calls those who are outside of Mee Christian tradition. This is a prime example of the power that God has to choose. However, God's choices are based on love and not on any selfish motive. Therefore, it is very important for the Christian tradition to make sure that their calling is always in the framework of service to the entire world. God has called us "into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord," called us "to belong to Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:9: Rom. 1:16) This divine "call is a holy calling," a calling in holiness. God calls us to be holy as He is holy, and to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, so that by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we may become in character and conduct what we already are in status, namely saints, the holy, the distinct, the separate, the special people of God.⁶

So, the New Testament authors declare in 1 Peter 2:9 that the God who called us out of the world sends us back into the world to increase the borders of His new

⁵Ibid., 22.

⁶Henry H. Barnette, Christian Calling and Vocation (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1965), 11-20. Above Bible references are to the King James Version.

community: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Barnette, continues his treatise on Christian calling by asserting:

He has called us like Christ to suffer in the world unjustly, and through suffering He has called us "to His eternal glory in Christ." Such is the church, God's people, called out of the world to Himself, called to Holiness, called to mission, called to suffering, and called through suffering to glory.⁷

John R.W. Stott puts much emphasis on the church being the people of God by stating:

The church is the new people of God. The term "people" in biblical thought has a technical sense designating those who stand in a special relationship to God. This usage is by no means unique to Paul but appears frequently in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, Israel was the people of God. Israel's Paul to the question, "Has God rejected His people?" (Rom. 11:11). Paul devotes a long discussion to the problem of Israel (Rom. 9-11) in the course of which he makes it clear that the church is God's new people. This is most vividly expressed in the use of quotations from Hosea. The prophet speaks of the present apostasy of Israel and her eschatological salvation. Hosea was directed to name one of his sons "not my people," for apostate Israel was no longer God's people and he was not their God (Hos. 1:9). However, in the day of salvation, this situation will be changed; they will be called "Sons of the living God" (Hos.1:10). "And I will say to which were not my people, You are my people, and he shall say, Thou art my God" (Hos. 2:23). In Hosea these prophecies clearly refer to Israel, but Paul applies them to the church, which consists of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom.9:24).⁸

God's Church Is One Church

Not only does Stott see the church as the people of God, but he recognizes their effectiveness in the context of unity by stating:

And his calling of the church is the calling of the whole church, and of every

⁷Ibid., 21.

⁸John R.W. Stott, Our Guilty Silence (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 52-80.

member of the church, without any distinction or partiality. God's church, is a marvelously comprehensive community. Christ has abolished more barriers than that of race or nationality, He has abolished those of class and sex as well. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is slave nor free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28). Thus the days of discrimination are over. The new humanity Christ has created in the church tolerates no distinction of race, rank, or sex. ⁹

Throughout the entire New Testament, the oneness of the people of God as a oneness that transcends all outward distinctions is often taken for granted. With the coming of Jesus Christ, all the barriers that divide human kind have been broken down and a new humanity is now taking shape in and through the church. God's purpose in Jesus Christ includes the oneness of the human race, and that oneness becomes visible in the church.

Stott summarizes his view on the body of Christ which finds its unity in Him by declaring:

As a result all Christian believers whether Jew or Gentile, male or female slave or free, educated Greek or uncouth barbarian, are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God and again fellow-heirs, members of the same, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.¹⁰

The Purpose of Unity

The Bible knows nothing of the human being as an individual in isolation; it knows only of a person as a related being, a person in relation to other people.

Joachim Jeremias asserts the unity of the church by stating:

The church is viewed in the New Testament as the solidarity that has been created in Jesus Christ and that stands in contrast with the old humanity

⁹Stott, One People. 19-20.

¹⁰Ibid., 21.

represented by Adam. The Adam-solidarity is humankind under the judgment of God. Its oneness is a oneness of sin and death. As a result, the Adam-solidarity can no longer be viewed in isolation from Christ's world, in which God has justified sinners. By means of the first Adam, the Kingdom of death was established among humankind; humanity as a whole slipped into the void of meaningless existence out of fellowship and communion with God under His judgment. By means of the last Adam, a new humanity comes into existence, in which the results of the fall are undone and God's original purpose for humanity is fulfilled."¹¹

Both Jews and Gentiles may now receive the seal of the Spirit by Faith.

Circumcision, which in former days was the sign of participation in the covenant of Abraham is now irrelevant in the new order (Col. 2:11). With the coming of Christ, "neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15, 5:6). God has brought into being a new humanity in which the barriers that separated the Gentiles from the Jews are broken down (Eph. 2:11).¹² Out of two large homogeneous units whose enmity was proverbial in the ancient world God has made one; two enemies have been reconciled in "one body" (v. 16). In his death Jesus removed the wall that stood between the two systems under which "the people" and "the nations" had lived in former days. Now both Jews and Gentiles stand as equals in the presence of God (v. 18), as members of a new fellowship that may be described as a city, a family, and a building (vv. 19-20).¹³ Therefore, the unity that God wills for the entire universe according to the first chapter of Ephesians becomes historically visible in a community where reconciliation both to God and to one

¹¹Joachim Jeremias, "Jesus, the One Who Brings Back Paradise," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), 772.

¹²Ibid., 773.

¹³Ibid.

another is possible on the basis of Christ's work. David Ellis supports the view of Jeremias in the area of unity in the body of Christ by asserting:

The unity resulting from Christ's work is not an abstract unity but a new community in which life in Christ becomes the decisive factor. The only peoplehood that has validity in the new order is that related to the church as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9). Although made up of Jews and Gentiles, the Church is placed together with Jews and Greeks as a third group (1 Cor. 10:32). It is viewed as "the Seed of Abraham" in which, since one is incorporated without any conditions apart from faith in Jesus Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).¹⁴

No one would, on the basis of this passage, suggest that Gentiles have to become Jews, females have to become males, and slaves have to become free, in order to share in the blessings of the gospel. But no justice is done to the text unless it is taken to mean that in Jesus Christ a new reality has come into being—a unity based on faith in him, in which membership is in no way dependent upon race, social status, or sex. No mere "spiritual" unity, but a concrete community made up of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women, all of them as equal members of the Christ — solidarity. That is the crux of the passage.¹⁵ Robert Rines joins the discussion of the Unity of the community of believers which finds her authenticity in Christ by declaring:

The Christian community that resulted from Pentecost was, of course, made up mainly of Jewish Christians. What else could be expected before the Gentile mission? Yet it would be a great mistake to conclude that it was in their Jewishness that they found their identity. No racial homogeneity, but

¹⁴David J. Ellis, *In God's Community* (Glasgow, Scotland: Pickering and Inglis, 1978) 10.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

Pentecost, was the basis of their unity. Only in the light of the outpouring of the Spirit are we able to understand how it was possible for the early Jerusalem Church to include in its constituency "unlearned and ignorant men," (Act 4:13); "People of the land," according to rabbinical and educated priest (6:7); and at a later stage Pharisees (15:5; 11:2); poor people in need of help and wealthy landlords (2:44-45; 4:32-37); possibly members of a well-to-do foreign community, Jews and Greeks; and at least one Gentile from Syrian Antioch (Acts 6:1-5).¹⁶

Luke's record shows that the basic ecclesiastical unit for both preaching and teaching was the house church (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12,17; 21:18). But there is nothing in Acts to support C. Peter Wagner's assertion, that "the mixed church at Jerusalem divided among homogeneous unit lines,"¹⁷ or to lead us as much as to imagine that there were different house churches for the educated and the uneducated, for the rich and the poor, for the Palestinian Jews and for the Jews from the dispersion. All evidence points in the opposite direction. One of Luke's main emphasis as he describes the church growing out of Pentecost is, in fact, that the believers were "together and they had all things in common" (Acts 2:44); that they were "of one heart and soul" (4:32). The burden of proof then lies with those who would assert that the Jerusalem Church was organized according to homogeneous units.

A modern church growth expert might have suggested the creation of two distinct denominations, one for the Palestinian Jews and another one for the Greek Jews. That would have certainly been a practical solution to the tensions existing

¹⁶Robert A. Raines New Life in the Church, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 64

¹⁷C Peter Wagner, Our Kind Of People (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 122-23.

between the two conflicting homogeneous units. We are told, however, that the apostles called the community together and asked them to choose seven men who would be responsible for the daily distribution (Acts 6:2-6). The units of the church across cultural barriers was thus preserved.

Following Stephen's martyrdom, a great persecution arose against the Jerusalem Church, apparently mainly against the Hellenist believers with whom Stephen had been identified (Acts 8:1). A result of the persecution, however, was that the first large-scale organization outside Palestine was launched by exiles who traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Syrian Antioch (11:19).

According to Luke's report, these exiles, aside from a few, shared the gospel with "none except Jews" (v. 19). Why so? No explicit answer is given in the narrative. Yet this statement is used by Donald McGarvan to support the claim that in the years following Pentecost, the Church made "an early adjustment" that favored the spread of the gospel that resulted in "one-race congregations" which arose by the dozens, perhaps by the hundreds.¹⁸ Luke's record, however, does not substantiate the thesis that the apostles deliberately promoted the formation of "one-race congregation" and tolerated Jewish prejudices against the Gentiles for the sake of numerical growth in the church. In order to claim that it does, one needs to come to scripture with the preconceived ideas that the apostles shared the modern theory that race prejudice as McGavran asserts, "can be understood and should be made an aid to Christianization,"¹⁹ and that the multiplication of the church invariably requires an

¹⁸Donald McGavran, The Clash Between Christianity and Culture (Washington, D.C.: Canon Press, 1974), 23.

¹⁹McGavran, The Bridges of God (London: World Dominion Press, 1955), 10.

adjustment to the homogeneous unit principle. Without this unwarranted assumption, one can hardly miss the point made by Acts that the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles was such a difficult step for the Jerusalem church that it took place only with the aid of visions and command (Acts 8:26; 10:1-16) or under pressure of persecution (8:1; 11:19-20).

An insight into the degree to which people from a variety of backgrounds worked together in the Antioch church is found in the list of leaders provided by Luke in Acts 13:1: "Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaeh a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." A more heterogeneous group could hardly be suggested! Barnabas was a Levite, a native of Cyprus (4:36). Simeon, as his nickname Niger ("Black") suggests, was a Jew (or proselyte?) apparently of dark complexion, perhaps to be identified with Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus' cross. Lucius was a Gentile (or a Jew with a Roman name?) a native of the African city of Cyrene, perhaps one of the men who had first preached the gospel in Antioch. Manaen was a "foster-brother" to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, with whom he had been reared. Saul was an ex-pharisee. A "Hebrew of Hebrews" and (as a Roman citizen) a member of a small, privileged minority in the eastern Mediterranean.

It would be futile to suggest that Jews and Gentiles heard the gospel together in the synagogues (Rom. 2:9-10; Acts 3:26), but then those who believed were instructed to separate into segregated house churches for the sake of the expansion of the gospel. Such a procedure would have been an open denial of apostolic teaching concerning the unity of the church. It would have also meant that the door of the church was made narrower than the door of the synagogue, where Jews and Gentiles

would worship together. The suggestion is so farfetched that it can hardly be taken seriously.²⁰

All the New Testament evidence, however, points in the opposite direction, namely, in the direction of an apostolic practice whose aim was the formation of churches that would live out the unity of the new humanity in Jesus Christ. The apostles knew very well that if the acceptance of "people as they are" was to become more than lip-service, accepting it had to take place at the level of the local congregations. Accordingly, they sought to build communities in which, right from the start, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, poor and rich would worship together and learn the meaning of their unity in Christ, although they often had to deal with difficulties arising out of the differences in backgrounds and social status among new converts.

The impact that the early church made on non-Christians because of Christian brotherhood across natural barriers can hardly be overestimated. The abolition of the old separation between Jew and Gentile was undoubtedly one of the most amazing accomplishments of the gospel in the first century. Equally amazing, however, was the breakdown of the class distinction between master and slave. As Michad Green comments, "When the Christian missionaries not only proclaimed that in Christ the distinction between slave and free man were done away as surely as those between Jew and Greek, but actually lived in accordance with their principles, then this had

²⁰Ibid., 11.

enormous appeal."²¹

In F. F. Bruce's words, "Perhaps this was the way in which the gospel made the deepest impression on the pagan world."²²

Church Unity versus the Homogeneous Unit Principle

How are we to evaluate the use of the homogeneous unit principle, advocated by Donald McGavran and his followers, in the light of the foregoing discussion of the apostolic teaching and practice regarding the unit of the church?

Before attempting to answer that question two observations are necessary for the sake of clarity. In the first place, it cannot be denied that from a biblical perspective the quantitative growth of the church is a legitimate concern in the Christian mission. If God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (Tim. 2:4), no Christian is in harmony with God's desire unless he or she also longs to see all coming to Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is clear that this longing will have to be expressed in practical terms (which may well include the use of anthropological and sociological insights) so that the gospel is in fact proclaimed as widely as possible. The issue in this research, therefore, is not the employment of principles that can help in the expansion of the church. In the second place, it is a fact, that hardly needs verification, that the growth of the church takes place in a specific social and cultural context and that people generally prefer to become Christians without having to cross the barriers between one context and another. This

²¹Michael Green, Evanglism in the Early Church (London: Hodderand Stoughton, 1970), 117-18.

²²F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1957), 277.

again, is not the issue of this study.

The real issue is whether church planting should be carried out so that, in the words of Donald McGavran, "people become Christians without crossing barriers."²³ Enough has been said regarding this issue to focus on the following conclusions.

First, in the early church the gospel was proclaimed to all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, rich or poor, without partiality. More often than not, during the Gentile mission, Jews and Gentiles heard the gospel together. The New Testament provides no indication that the apostolic church had a missionary strategy based on the premise that church planting would be more effective if carried on within each separate homogeneous unit and was therefore to be conducted along racial or social lines.

Secondly, the breakdown of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, not merely a result of it. Evangelism would, therefore, involve a call to be incorporated into a new humanity that included all kinds of people. Conversion was never merely a religious experience; it was also a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their identity in Christ rather than in their race, social status, or sex.

Thirdly, the church not only grew, but it grew across cultural barriers. The New Testament contains no example of a local church whose membership had been taken by the apostles from a single homogeneous unit, unless that expression is used to mean no more than a group of people with a common language.

²³McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, 198.

Fourthly, each church was meant to portray the oneness of its members regardless of their racial, cultural, or social differences, and in order to reach that aim the apostles suggested practical measures.

Lastly, they regarded Christian community across cultural barriers, not as an optional blessing to be enjoyed whenever circumstances were favorable to it, or as an addendum that could be left out if deemed necessary to make the gospel more palatable, but as essential to Christian commitment.

If these conclusions are correct, it is quite evident that the use of the homogeneous unit principle for church growth and community has no biblical foundation. Its advocates have taken as a starting point a sociological observation and developed a missionary strategy. Only then, have they made the attempt to find biblical support. The analysis above leads us to conclude that the church growth emphasis on homogeneous unit churches is in fact directly opposed to the apostolic teaching and practice in relation to the expansion of the church. No missionary mythology can be built without a solid biblical theology of mission as a basis. This leads us to assert in Chapter 3 the importance of having a missiology that is centered in the development of a biblical understanding of community. In Christ Jesus all old communities that divide are turn asunder and new communities are established to give nurture and growth to its citizens.

CHAPTER 3

The Early Church: The New Testament Model for Community

Many of God's people are sincerely seeking for a better way to experience church life. They are recognizing they have not found it in the traditional church. It is now a transitional period in the life of the people of God. It's the beginning of the Second Reformation, and it will go on for a long time to come. Ralph Neighbor points out this spirit of restlessness among modern church-goers as they search for the more relational type of worship by commenting:

Other more traditional church styles are being tested in this period of unrest. The "mega-church" has become the contemporary "supermarket" for churchgoers. Other groups are seeking their destiny in the "Praise Churches," which provide overhead projectors to display the newest in worship songs. There are the "Restoration Churches," seeking to provide people with a more personal experience of the Holy Spirit's activity. Blends of the older charismatic churches continue to crop up, some almost cult-like in their control of their memberships. It's all a part of the contemporary search for spirituality among the people of God. With each new experiment, the traditional church loses ground. In all of these attempts, a basic flaw in church life is still evident: they're all "large group" structures. In every case, the members still drive to the meeting place from their homes.¹

None of these models recognizes the basic flaw in church lifestyle built upon a Program Base Model, a term we shall refer to as PBM. The term describes a structure of church life that is neither biblical or efficient. It is used by nearly one hundred percent of all traditional churches today, whether they are evangelical, liturgical, pentecostal, or "fullness in their theology. It has taken a century for this

¹Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr. Where Do We Go From Here? (Houston: Touch Outreach, 1991), 30.

virus to infect the church worldwide, and it may take another half-century before it finally succeeds in decimating the structures it infects.²

PBM churches rightly acknowledge that the foundation of their church is Jesus Christ. What they build upon that foundation is their error, an error which utterly annihilates what makes the church authentic.³

To reveal the problems of PBM structures, we shall first view the church in its purest form as revealed in the New Testament.

The Early Church

In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle and the Temple were both referred to as "the house of God," (1 Chron. 6:48; 25:6; Ezra 5:2,15). In the New Testament, the concept of "house of God" radically changes. Peter sees believers as "living stones" that are being built up as a "spiritual house" (1 Peter. 2:5). Thus, "the house of God" is no longer seen as an edifice made by joining stones, but by joining human lives.⁴ Further, the builder of the house is Jesus Himself, who said in Matt. 16:18, "I will build my church." This construction is not to be the work of skilled specialists as was the case in the erection of the Tabernacle. The Lord Himself is to become the builder. The stones He will select for the walls are called *ekklesia*, "called out ones," also translated "church."⁵

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 31.

⁴Ibid., 35.

⁵Ibid.

A significant word appears in Jesus' teaching. The Greek word for "build" used in Matt. 16:18 is *oikodomeo*. It is frequently used as a verb to describe the construction of an edifice (Matt. 23:29, 26:61), or, used as a noun, as the building itself (Matt. 24:1). However, it refers most often to construction using material called "living stones." In Acts 20:32, Paul uses the verb form to say that God is the One "who can build you up...." Eph. 2:21 tells us "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord." Hebrews 3:6 says, "But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."⁶

As one shall see, *oikodomeo* also describes the main work of the living stones themselves. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (Thess. 5:11). "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:12).⁷ It is obvious that Jesus intended to be the builder of the church, but just as obvious that the "living stones" were to be empowered by Him to share in the building up, or edifying, of all nearby stones. Consider the lifestyle of such a church: a tight relationship exists between every "living stone" and each adjacent stone. United by the cement of love, the stones know the life of Christ, flowing His grace-gifts into them, empowering them to continually build up one

⁶Neighbor, Building Bridges. Opening Hearts, 19.

⁷Ibid.

another.⁸

The Body of Christ

Another picture of the church likens it to the human body. Christ now becomes the head, the *ekklesia*, the body parts. The Holy Spirit immerses each new believer into the body, properly connected at conversion as a working, functional member.⁹ Paul explains in 1 Cor. 12:14-19 that the unity of this body is such that one body part never says, "I have no need of you" to another member. As the hand and foot and stomach must interact, each member of the body of Christ must live in intimacy. The members are united into a whole. There is freedom from diversity, a oneness of mind or feeling, exactly like that of a human body.¹⁰ Once again, the concept of bodily parts being responsible for building up one another becomes the focus (Eph. 4:15-16).

In a study of the early church, one observes that this theory was put into practice without a great amount of instruction. Paul describes the mutual building up of believers in 1 Corinthians 14. His order is for every single Christian to use spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up the church. He sneers at the idea of exercising gifts for personal enjoyment. The word *oikodomeo* appears six times in his teaching (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26) as he bears down on the fact that each is to participate in the ministry of building the body. Neither physical nor spiritual

⁸Ibid., 25.

⁹Hudgson, 24.

¹⁰Ibid.

youthfulness are to be reasons for exempting Christians from participating. All are to exercise spiritual gifts to edify the others. Ralph Neighbour affirms:

The early church did exactly that. Recognizing there cannot be total participation by every member when the gatherings are only made up of large, impersonal groups, the people of God moved from house to house in small groups. By moving among their residences, they become intimately acquainted with each person's surroundings. These house churches functioned from their inception as the nucleus of the Christian community. The Lord of the church intended it to be that way; if He had desired it to be otherwise, He could have shaped its lifestyle differently. There were many organizations in His culture that assembled members into halls or specially constructed auditoriums. Guilds had their edifices. Synagogues had dotted the countryside for generations, gathering members in impersonal large groups. Pagan temples were also common. Nevertheless, Jesus called the church to meet in homes.¹¹

His own disciples were gathered with Him in a home setting when He served them their last supper together.

The Home Ministry of Jesus

It's significant that in Jesus' ministry He operated out of homes, not formal buildings. He often taught his disciples in houses (Mark 2:1;7:14-27; 9:33; 10:2-12; Matt. 13:36). We frequently see Him in the homes of others, including Peter, Matthew a ruler, Simon the leper, Simon and Andrew, Levi a pharisee, Jairus, Zacchaeus, and Martha. He referred to the owner of a large home in Jerusalem who would consider his upper room Jesus's "guest room" (Mark 14:14). While the Son of Man "had no place to lay His head," at the same time He taught in Mark 10:29-30 "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in his present

¹¹"Neighbour, Building Bridges, Opening Hearts, 22-23.

age."

His itinerant servants took this literally. They lived with families in homes wherever they went. In fact, living in a home was a prime strategy for bringing people to personal faith. In Luke 10, Jesus assigned the seventy disciples to go to Perea to enter homes, offering peace to all who lived within. When they found a man of peace," they remained in that home, eating and drinking whatever was set before them. In this way, a household would be converted to Christ-and another house church would be formed.

Peter's vision came at the house of Simon in Joppa. It was in the house of Mary, the mother of John, that Christians gathered to pray. Paul's conversion took place in the house of Judas, as Ananias prayed with him. We see him staying in homes wherever he served, including the house of Jason—who, as host, had to pay his bail when he was jailed. He lived in the house of Lydia after her household had been converted and ate in the jailer's house after his whole family had come to believe in God. There are many more who hosted the Apostles, including Titus, Justus, Crispus, Philip, Gaius, Aquila and Priscilla. Neighbour continues to emphasize the importance of the home by affirming:

There is a very important reason for the early church to be shaped in homes. It is in this location that values are shared. It may be possible to transmit information in a neutral building, but few values are implanted there. Value systems are ingrained through living together in a household. Something stirs deep within when life is shared between the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the wise and the foolish. In the house groups, all participated and all were impacted by the values of the others as Christ lived within them.¹²

¹²Ibid., 27.

Results of House Churches

The lifestyle of the first Christian's meeting in house groups was so powerful that daily conversions took place. The total involvement of Christians in Home Cells overwhelmed outsiders: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you" (1 Cor. 14:24-25). This may be termed "Body Life Evangelism." The simple witness of the life of Jesus, observed as it flowed in His body with power and reality, caused the most hardened skeptics to confess Him as Lord.

In that early church, there were no specialists. Apart from the teaching of the Apostles, leadership was not emphasized to any great extent. Details were handled by those who were closest at hand as needs arose.¹³

Our Lord knows there are two factors in spiritual growth. One is receiving His power; the other is becoming the channel of it. As the movement developed, equippers of the saints for the work of their ministry arose from within the Home Cells. Ephesians 4:11-12 specifically states that Christ Himself "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelist, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...." Nothing is ever said about Paul or anyone else in the church appointing any of these men. This silence is significant. These men earned their

¹³Ibid.

positions by demonstrating the anointing of God on their equipping ministries.

This, then is the PBM of the church as it is supposed to be. In contrast, the PBM concept does not build people on the foundation of Christ; it only builds programs.

The first thing a PBM church looks for are Specialists to direct the different programs of the church. Even the smallest group will seek for a Pastor-Specialist who can come to preach, teach, counsel, increase the budget, administer its spending, win the lost, and effectively manage the church schedule. He is not particularly seen as an equipper of the people for the work of the ministry"; instead, he is the Minister. He does the things that professional clergy do. He preaches, marries, buries, visits the sick in the hospitals, pays courtesy calls to the elderly, consults with the deacons or elders, and—if the church can afford it—supervises the staff. He is the primary victim of the PBM church life. He will move his family to new "church fields" on a regular basis, always seeking a more responsive group of church members to fulfill his desire to reach the lost.

Yet, while he desires to reach the lost, he doesn't have time to know many of them. There isn't enough time in his busy week to know the unconverted. The entire congregation can thus assume that cultivating unreached persons is not a high priority for the Christian life, since their leader never produces a convert apart from his pulpit ministry. With such a model, they also busy themselves with church tasks.

The mismatch of Christians with church tasks they perform is alarming. When the Program needs a warm body, people are enlisted regardless of their gifts or

their abilities. Thousands more are not used at all - they are not deemed suitable for the vacancies to be filled. Few opportunities exist for the discovery of spiritual gifts. The work for the PBM church does not need them very often or for very long at a time. The God-given calling of every believer to be involved in building up others in the body of Christ is never developed. This is true of the conservative charismatic or Pentecostal groups as well as the Evangelicals.

Consider the inefficiency of the PBM church: buildings stand empty except for a handful of hours a week; the Specialist serves the members only to expand their specialty; only one-eighth of the members are involved in PBM tasks; a massive group of hopeless inactives exist; and, last but not least, the entire church has virtually no contact with the unreached community.

How can this be reconciled with the intention of Christ to "seek and to save that which was lost?" Jesus said in John 12:26, "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be." Besides a few contacts with the synagogues and the Temple, Jesus' life was spent among sinners. The one who reminded us that the sick have need of a physician simply cannot be pleased with the PBM church that seldom ventures out of its church building to know or minister among the sinners. The reason this condition could possibly exist is there are no Specialist in the church who are specifically hired to develop a "program" to minister to those who are poor, blind, imprisoned, and downcast--the specific tasks Jesus listed as His own job description. If the body of Christ is to be doing the tasks of Christ, the PBM structure can be seen as not only inefficient, but also defective.

Worst of all, life in the PBM church does not provide the all-important koinonia, or fellowship, needed to create true community lifestyles, where people build up one another.

Building Community: The Goal of Home Cells

It is very important to affirm that we are both individual and social creatures. Our humanness is a fact of experience, and it enables us to assert both our individual identity and our membership in the larger unit of society around us. Everyone is unique, however much we may share common physical features and possess similar traits of temperament that govern predictable patterns of behavior.

This previous point is in need of some corrective adjustment. For it is equally the case that our full experience of being human is possibly only in community of other people, and we attain the richness of our life only as we enjoy it in society. The philosopher Gabriel Marcel has put it in an epigram: "To exist is to co-exist." Scripture also recognizes this truth in the creation story. "God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female" (Gen. 1:27).

The New Testament is just as insistent that conversion, although personal, requires a social context for its maintenance and maturity. This point is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 12:12, 27 when Paul enunciates: "For Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. . . . All of you, then, are Christ's body, and each one is part of it." The Christian life is possible in all but extraordinary circumstances, only within a network of inter-personal relationships that both lay their claims upon us and invite us to contribute

our best. Ultimately being a Christian includes both the individual response each must make to offer and demand of the good news that comes with Jesus Christ and the entry into new sphere of social pattern, a community of our fellow believers without whom we fail to achieve our full stature as men and women "in Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

It must be said with a deep spirit of reverence: He who is Eternal has always existed in the lifestyle of community with only one break in this continuity. That single exception occurred at Calvary. As Christ took the ugliness of our sin into Himself, He cried out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken Me?" The vileness of our sin, received into His sinless body, severed the eternal community of the Godhead! The worst part about sin is that it always destroys community.

What was it like for our Lord to experience separation from the Godhead? To know what Jesus experienced, we would have to enter into the perfect community of the Godhead. Unfortunately, our present humanness precludes that for us.

In Gen. 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . . ." An essential characteristic of love is its desire to enlarge community. Eden was not paradise because of its beauty but because it was the place of unbroken relationships. It was the place of giving and receiving, the continuous action, which takes place wherever there is true community.

God knew the risks in carrying out His decision to create Adam with the freedom of choice. This freedom permitted Adam to enter fellowship with the Triune One, but it also allowed him liberty to choose hate instead of love, disobedience

instead of loyalty, selfishness rather than servanthood. Knowing the end from the beginning and knowing what Adam would choose, God still made His decision. We begin to realize how much God reassures community as we consider His perilous commitment to allow man the liberty to decide things for himself. Community must always be a voluntary matter. We are never forced into it; it is something we desire.

Community was precisely what Satan attacked and hated. He succeeded in destroying all the potential relationships which might exist in Eden. God to man, man to wife, brother to brother, all were fragmented and set asunder.

Life after Eden quickly became a tragedy. Man's first knowledge of violent death became the ripened fruit of the ugly jealousy of a brother against a brother. Community among men was replaced by loneliness, fragmentation, and a tragic, needless grave.

Community in the New Testament

From men who would normally never even speak to one another, Jesus shaped twelve disciples. He set out in forming a community among a group who, if left to itself, would have never met by choice. Fishermen, rubbed shoulders with a tax collector. A compassionate John worked side by side with a violent Peter. What unlikely combinations!

He lived with them for three years, modelling a lifestyle of love and acceptance. These twelve men discovered that community can be a terrible place to mask limitations, egotism, ignorance, and jealousies. Try as hard as they could, they were unable to hide the selfishness within themselves. They manipulated Jesus to

gain preeminence over one another, striving for significant positions in the "pecking order" of the little community. He saw through everyone of their manipulations, and kept right on loving them. In true community, men and women look past color, class, and caste to see the potential within one another. Eventually, they learned that greatness would involve their dedication in accepting the role of a faithful servant. They discovered the essence of community is a sense of belonging: their true worth was not their reputation, but their readiness to give themselves unsparingly to the rest.

By living with twelve men, God in human flesh had made a clear statement of the way community develops. While thousand pressed Him from every side, He chose to be with one cell of life. Indeed, existence lived apart from that cell had no value. He did not simply gather them once a week for a discipline class, he lived with them. They took trips together, went fishing together, visited Jerusalem together, prayed together, had cookouts by the sea. They camped outdoors. They shared a common purse.

Of greatest importance, they had a purpose. If community is created without specific goals, there will soon be conflicts and the whole idea of unity and community will collapse. In *A Home for the Heart*, Brune Bettelheim writes, "I am convinced community can flourish only if it exist, for an aim outside itself. Community is viable if it is the outgrowth of a deep involvement in a purpose which is other than, or above, that of being a community!"¹⁴ By precept and example, Jesus was teaching His disciples that value systems are created in the context of living, not

¹⁴Bruno Bettelheim, *A Home for the Heart* (New York: Random House, 1973), 41.

studying. This is one of the reasons values are always shaped faster in cell groups than in impersonal PBM structures. When one faces a crisis or wrestles with a sin, the group can respond immediately, rather than having to wait for a pastor's sermon to touch on the problem.

M. Scott Peck verifies the validity of Home Cells by stating: "Currently the church is not only the Body of Christ, it is not even a body, a community. It must become a community before it can serve as the Body of Christ."¹⁵

One may well be justified in wondering whether our Lord saw the church as anything, ever, larger than a cell group capable of experiencing true community. He Himself could have created large group structures; He never did. It was enough to address five thousand; He chose to live with twelve. The basic building block of the Body which would be inhabited by Jesus would be composed of cells, not masses of people who do not experience community.

This is the very reason the Lord's Supper became so precious to the cell groups from their very first gatherings. It was a constant reminder of the place and the cost of their birth and their life.

This ordinance was instituted in the upper room of a house with thirteen persons who had lived in community together. It was not meant to become a formal occasion. It was to be an activity of the community, which means the activity of a cell group.

¹⁵Peck, 300.

It was meant for use in small groups where there is community, where there is a sense of Christ as the Head. It takes the church back to its beginnings, reminding it over and over of the great price that Christ paid in order to establish community.

In the early church it was a part of the Agape Feast held by the cells. In Paul's idea of community, Robert Banks explains, each time a cell gathered, the common meal would begin with the breaking of bread and close with the passing of the cup, a Passover tradition which had been carried on for centuries.¹⁶ Thus, the "love feast" began and ended with a reminder that the life of *ekklesia* began at the cross.

Nonscriptural traditions have always been the enemy of the church. Hindrances to the development of community today must also be rejected.

Cell churches are the only way that true community can be experienced based on New Testament models. This assertion is not a new formula for present churches, rather, it is a plea to return to a lifestyle which has been eroded by centuries of unbiblical, narrow-minded traditions. The cell group is not just a portion of church life to be clustered with a dozen other organizations; it is church life, and when it properly exists, all other competing structures are neither needed nor valid.

A real community should be a sign that it is possible for men and women to live together, love each other, celebrate and work together. A community is a sign that life is possible in a materialistic world where people so often either ignore or fight each other.

¹⁶Robert Banks, Paul's Idea of Community (Sydney City: Australia: Homebush Press, 1979), 96-1 01.

To fully understand the importance of Home Cells, we must consider the word *oikos*, a biblical term that describes the basic building block of society. It appears throughout the Bible and refers to the personal community which exists for us all. It is translated into English as house or household. For example, in Acts 16:31, Paul and Silas used it when they said. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

The *oikos* each of us lives within are not large. We may know several dozen, even several hundred people, but quality time spent with others is extremely limited and only those to whom we devote quality time can be said to be a part of our *oikos*, our personal community.

In Pastor and Parish: A Systems Approach. E. Mansell Pattison has examined this basic structure of human life in depth. He has sought to describe contemporary *oikos* relationships in psychological and sociological terms:

I have found that the normal person has about twenty to thirty people in his or her psycho-social system. There are typically about five or six people in each subgroup of family, relatives, friends, and work-recreation- church associates. About 60 percent of the people in this normal system interact with each other. In contrast, neurotics have only ten to twelve people in their psycho-social systems. Their systems include people who may be dead or live far away.... Only about 30 percent of the system is interconnected. It is as if the neurotic, having a variety of individual relationships, is like the hub of a wheel having spokes that radiate outward but are not connected by a rim. Thus the neurotic has an impoverished psycho-social system. For psychotics we get a third pattern. Here there are four to five people in the system. The interpersonal relations are ambivalent and nonreciprocal.¹⁷

¹⁷E. Mansell Pattison, Pastor and Parish: A Systems Approach (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 19.

The system is 90 to 100 percent interconnected. The psychotic is caught in an exclusive nonpermeable small system that is binding, constructive, and destructive.¹⁸

One's primary group which includes one's relatives and friends who relate to the individual through work, recreation, hobbies, and neighbors. These are the people one talks to, relates to, and shares with, for at least a total of one hour per week.

In the light of Pattison's comments, consider again one's ministry as Christ's body: He is to be in the body, preaching good news through the body to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight to the blind and releasing the oppressed. Every one of these hurting people are so bound they cannot come to the body. In every single case mentioned in Luke 4:18, people helplessly wait for the body to come to them. There is no other way for them to be reached apart from penetrating *oikoses* that are not "normal" where fragmentation of the social group has happened, and where hopelessness and loneliness reign in the kingdom.

If the church is ever going to touch the very ones referred to in Luke 4:18, it must be done through cell groups. To do the work of our Master, one must see the innate evil in church systems which bottles one up and limits one's contact with the unreached ones.

Jesus Penetrated Oikoses

While the church pulls people out of their *oikoses* and gives them membership in an organization which swallows them up, the New Testament reveals a different

¹⁸Neighbour, Building Bridges. Opening Hearts, 28-29.

approach to people relationships. Jesus constantly did His work by invading *oikos* groups. He knew there was no other way to share the gospel except to penetrate these small groups. It is obvious that each *oikos* is based in a house, not an institutional building. Thus, the Lord spent his time going from one house to another.¹⁹

In Luke 19:2-5, we see Jesus making contact with Zacchaeus. He says to him, "Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house today." In Luke 7:36-38, we find Him in the *oikos* of a Pharisee who has invited Him to have dinner with him. While He reclines at the table, a prostitute comes and pours perfume on His feet. What amazing examples of *oikos* penetration.²⁰

In Matt. 8:14, He enters Peter's house and heals one of the *oikos* members living there. In Matt. 9:10, He eats dinner with His disciples and many tax collectors and sinners at Matthew's house. Again, he penetrates an *oikos* in Matt. 9:23 as He enters the ruler's house and sees the flute players and the noisy crowd. In Matt. 17:25, Peter finds Him in a Capernaum house, where Jesus speaks to him about paying taxes. We read in Mark 3:20 that Jesus entered a house, and a crowd gathered, "so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat." In Mark 7:17, He enters a house where His disciples quiz Him about a parable. In Mark 7:24, He enters a house to be alone, only to be swamped by a crowd who learned where He was staying. In Mark 9:33, He is in a Capernaum house when He asks the disciples,

¹⁹Ibid., 30.

²⁰Ibid.

"What were you arguing about on the road?"²¹

The Early Church Penetrated Oikoses

In Acts 5:42 we read that the early church went from house to house. In Acts 8:3, when Saul wanted to destroy the church, he knew where to find the people of God. We are told, "Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison."

It is interesting to see in Acts 10 how the Holy Spirit arranged for Peter to get from the house of Simon the Tanner to the residence of Cornelius, where his conversion took place. The penetration of *oikoses* is the pattern for ministry in the first century.²²

Conversions are frequently recorded as sweeping an entire *oikos* into the Kingdom. In Acts 16, both Lydia and the jailer are converted along with the members of their *oikos*. The first act of Lydia after her conversion was to invite Paul to her house.²³

Jesus reminded us in Matt. 10:36 that following Him can be a costly decision: "a man's enemies will be the members of his own *oikos*. . . ." Making a decision to follow Him can cause rejection among primary people. However, there is a very special *oikos* for those who have faced the ultimate rejection. Hebrews 3:6 says, "But Christ is faithful as a Son over God's *oikos*. And we are his *oikos*, if we hold on to

²¹Ibid., 32-34.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 47.

our courage and the hope of which we boast."²⁴

Truly, the early church thought about the chains of *oikoses* to be won while they simultaneously rejoiced that God had formed them into Basic Christian Communities.²⁵ For the church to live at *oikos* level was certainly God's plan, and assuredly the pattern which was followed until men's concepts got in the way. The New Testament is clear on the importance of building a spirit of *oikos* in Home Cells. It is in this context that the early church experienced rapid growth.

²⁴Ibid., 50.

²⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

Home Cell Ministry: A Report of the Yoido Full Gospel Church

In the book by John N. Vaughn entitled *Trends Among the World's Largest Churches*. He asserts the fact that "of the twenty largest congregations in the world, six of the largest can be found in South Korea.¹ He then sets forth a list of these churches as follows: among the largest of the congregations in the world is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul; the world's two largest Presbyterian churches are the Young Nak and Chung-Kyeon congregations, both in Seoul; the world's two largest Methodist churches are the Kwang Lim Methodist Church of Seoul and Inchon's Soog Eui Methodist Church; and Asia's largest Baptist Church is the Sungrak Baptist Church in Seoul. However, when one tries to pinpoint the key ingredient to each of the congregations' success in growth, one major factor is evident: the small Home Cell concept. The use of small groups, called cells, composed of groups of twelve to sixteen members each, is the most common strategy for church growth in South Korea. It was from this observation that the writer has been challenged to do closer research of this phenomenon of church growth.

This study is limited to the Yoido Full Gospel Church which is pastored by Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea. His congregation as of November 17, 1991

¹John N. Vaughn, *Trends Among the World's Largest Churches* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale 1985), 130.

numbered over 600,000 members.² For believers of Yoido Full Gospel Church, the Home Cell is the center of church activities, and is one of the major factors for its growth. As Moses, upon recommendation of his father-in-law Jethro, appointed leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties and, tens, in order to lead his people, so 600,000 members of Yoido Full Gospel Church are being trained systematically by member leads under the leadership of 620 qualified pastors.

Seoul city has been divided into 22 districts. These 22 districts are later divided into 406 sub-districts, and these sub-districts divided into sections and Home Cells.³

Regular Home Cell services are held at each members house, in turn, once a week. Various prayer meetings are carried out district-wide throughout their Home Cell meetings. Members have Bible studies, concerted prayer, and witness to their unbelieving neighbors. As members of Yoido Full Gospel Church, these Home Cell members also participate in the regular services of the church.⁴

Leaders of Home Cells are called sectional leaders, Home Cell leaders, and assistant Home Cell leaders. They are trained in the Layman Bible School and in Bi annual Home Cell Leader's Seminars. Also, Mee Home Cell Leaders College, which is operated by the church, provides a ten-week training course in the Bible and its doctrine. Yoido Full Gospel Church successfully practices the Home Cell system,

²Paul Y. Cho, Home Cell System (Seoul: Church Growth Press, 1987, 21.

³Ibid., 130.

⁴Ibid.

which is one of the major factors for its growth.

In an interview with Lydia M. Swain, Dr. Cho's personal secretary, she states, "the key to Dr. Cho's success is in his strong belief in prayer." In fact, if one were to take a stool and stand it on four legs each of those legs would stand for one of his keys to success: Prayer, Holy Spirit, Preached Word, and Home Cells.⁵

At this point, it is very crucial that we take a closer look at the four success steps to church growth as enunciated in the ministry of Paul Cho. Church growth has become one of the most noteworthy subjects in Christianity today. Before 1980, individual revival movements took place with such prominent revival figures as Bill Graham and Oral Roberts. More recently, it appears that the individual revival movements have abated and revivals have burst forth in the local churches. Each year has had its specific move of God. The healing movement in the 1960s, the charismatic movement in the 1970s, the church growth movement in the 1980s and now the small group movement of the 90s.

Following are four important steps to church growth gathered in a personal interview with Dr. Paul Y. Cho.⁶

Prayer and Church Growth: Step One

It is utterly impossible for a pastor to expect his church to grow without prayer. Many ministers today think the motivating power of church growth is in a particular system, or in a particular organizational structure. This is a faulty opinion.

⁵Lydia M. Swain, interview with author, 17 November 1991.

⁶Paul Cho, interview with author, 13 March 1989.

The motivating power behind church growth is fervent prayer.

Upon graduation from Bible school, Cho first pioneered a church in Bulkwangdong, a suburb of Seoul, in May 18, 1958. At that time, BuLicwant-dong was a very remote place where foxes roamed at night. During the summer, more frogs than people came to the church services. Their noise greatly disturbed his preaching. To add to the difficulty, a long rainy period, known as the monsoon, took place in the summer.

His first congregation consisted of only five people, and they were his family. His life as a young pastor was quite miserable and frustrating. In fact, a couple of times he considered quitting the ministry. The only thing he did in such a difficult situation was to pray. Prayer became his solution as he sought God and found peace through fervent prayer. Every night thereafter, he prayed until the early hours of the morning for the congregation to increase. Due to the devastation following the Korean War, it was very difficult to evangelize. The church was expected to supply the people with financial and material needs, as well as the Word of God.

However, a change came to the church which caused it to grow. Some gangs in the village threatened his church. saying that if he didn't show them miracles, they would destroy the church building.

Meanwhile, there was a lady who had been suffering from paralysis for seven years. Cho started to pray for this lady in order to show the miraculous power of God to those who still believed in shamanism. One day as he was praying for her, the power of God came, down and she was marvelously healed.

The lady came to the church, and when the gang saw the change, they repented of their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. It was not long before others in the village began to come to church and confess that truly God did exist. Naturally, the church began to grow rapidly. A short time ago, while holding an inter-denominational seminar for ministers, Cho was interviewed on television by McGavran of the Fuller Theological Seminary in California. During the interview, he made the point that "without signs and wonders, the church cannot grow." The Fuller Theological Seminary now offers a course in "Signs and Wonders."

Cho does not believe that he has received a special gift from God in regard to divine healing. He just read the Word of God and applied the principles contained therein to his own ministry. As a result, the Holy Spirit works through his ministry. He has seen souls saved, broken hearts healed, and physical diseases touched by the power of the Holy Spirit.

One thing to remember is that signs and wonders can never take place without prayer. Cho also noted that he believes the clergy should pray more fervently and eagerly than any other person. He wakes up every morning at 5:00 a.m. and spends at least one or two hours in private prayer. Unless he follows this pattern, he feels there is no way he can minister to his people. When he gets deeply involved with prayer, his soul becomes full of hope and encouragement, and his body is revitalized. This is why he admonishes ministers to pray for one or two hours early in the morning. By keeping a consistent time, the result will show in the interpretation of

the Word of God. To a pastor, the word being preached is like life. The Biblical interpretation of the Word of God is the most important message. How to interpret the Bible determines what is preached. What is preached determines the growth of the church.

Prayer helps interpret the Bible in the right way. Regarding the importance of prayer, Herb Miller, in his book entitled Evangelism's Open Secrets, asserts, "you can always estimate a person's spiritual depth by the breadth of their praying. If they aren't doing much praying, you won't find God doing much in their life."⁷ The same is true of congregations. God won't work any miracles where people won't let Him. And prayer is the primary tool by which he accomplishes miracles. Someone asked E. Stanley Jones for the secret of his tremendous physical energy. He wrote more than two dozen books and preached three times a day across India, China, and America. This went on for more than forty years. He replied, "I have kept up my prayer life daily. So I do not face life alone."⁸

Look at the biography of Christ again. What characteristic of his life-style makes him different from other persons? One of the most obvious is his praying. Many times the disciples would awaken early in the morning to discover Jesus missing from the camp. They found him out by himself, praying. In the midst of great crowds clamoring for his healing touch, he often withdrew into a quiet place to pray. If Jesus needed to do that, how can we expect to live effectively without it?

⁷Herb Miller, Evangelism's Open Secrets (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1977), 73.

⁸Ibid.

And how can our churches hope to succeed without it?⁹

Taylor G. Bunch, in his book Prevailing Prayer exhorted, "The evangelization of the world is a superhuman task. It requires divine power."¹⁰ And this power is acquired through prayer.

Paul Cho asserted that at one time he neglected praying and used the Bible as a tool of philosophy. This was when his church was at Seodaimun before it moved to Yoido. On one particular morning, his subject was on "existentialism." After the service, an elderly lady came into his office with her grey-haired husband. Instead of telling him how wonderful the service was, they told him that they were very disappointed because they came to hear the Word of God and not philosophy.

After this experience, he determined within himself to preach the Word, and he began praying harder than ever before. Cho believes that a pastor who has fellowship with God becomes deeper and stronger through the communion of the Holy Spirit. The pastors who have a deep fellowship with God have power in their ministry. By being filled with the Holy Spirit, your ministry will be overflowing with deep abundant truths from the living Word of God.¹¹

⁹Ibid., 74.

¹⁰Taylor G. Bunch, Prevailing Prayer (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 14.

¹¹Paul Y. Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups (South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge Publishing, 1981), 119.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is in direct proportion to prayer.¹² There is no way to be full of the Holy Spirit without prayer. It is because of prayer that the Full Gospel Central Church has been growing at a rapid rate. The members of the church pray without ceasing. Every weekend at Prayer Mountain, about 10,000 people gather to intercede in prayer for souls to be brought into the Kingdom of God through the church, and for themselves.¹³

International Prayer Mountain of Yoido Full Gospel Church, located in Osanri, Kyunggi Province, was built in 1973 as an inter-denominational prayer house, and is open to all who desire to fast and pray.¹⁴ Since the opening of this prayer haven, a great number of believes have visited there to fast and pray. They have experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and have received divine healing.¹⁵

In 1978, a sanctuary and dormitory were constructed and in 1982 a new main sanctuary was established, seating 10,000 people, plus two smaller chapels were erected, each seating 5,000 people and enabling corporate worship on any given day.¹⁶

In 1983, the name of this prayer haven was changed to International Prayer Mountain. The number of people who visit Prayer Mountain is increasing day by

¹²Ibid.

¹³Paul Y. Cho, "Church Publications" (unpublished pamphlet), Yoido Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea, 1991, 12.

¹⁴Ibid., 13.

¹⁵Ibid., 14.

¹⁶Ibid., 15.

day. Over 3,000 lay Christians visit Prayer Mountain on a daily basis. Records indicate those who visit most often are 40 percent Presbyterian, 19 percent Full Gospel and others 41 percent. Prayer needs at Prayer Mountain are: (1) baptism of the Holy Spirit, (2) church problems, (3) family matters, and (4) divine healing.¹⁷

In 1988 about 89,231 foreigners from all over the world visited Prayer Mountain. Western-style dormitories are available for a nominal fee and can people.¹⁸

The General Welfare Building with cafeteria, snack shop, clinic room, library and a subsidiary sanctuary was completed in June 1989, making it possible for 210,000 believers to attend simultaneously in the main sanctuary and 11 subsidiary sanctuaries.¹⁹

For deeper personal prayer, 301 prayer grottoes provide a private atmosphere. A prayer grotto is just a little room about 4x4 with a small door that gives one a feeling of privacy. After coming from this prayer environment it was absolutely clear that the entire ministry and the success of Yoido Full Gospel is centered around prayer. The Pastor is a man of prayer. The church is a house of prayer. If one would follow the order of divine service, one would notice that the church has over seven opportunities to pray at their gatherings. Yoido Full Gospel Church provides free shuttle bus service from the church to Prayer Mountain daily from 7:00 a.m. to

¹⁷Ibid., 16.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

7:00 p.m. on an hourly basis. When Paul Cho is asked about one of the secrets of his church's growth he will simply say, "Go to Prayer Mountain." Prayer is the motivating power to lead this big ship of the Full Gospel Central Church.²⁰

The Holy Spirit and Church Growth: Step Two

The right relationship with the Holy Spirit is essential to becoming a successful Pastor. Cho insisted that there is a difference between being filled with the Holy Spirit and having the right relationship with Him. The person who has the right fellowship with the Holy Spirit is the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit and should accept Him as a person. To have koinonia with the Holy Spirit, a person must have: (1) the relationship of fellowship, (2) the relationship of partnership, and (3) the relationship of transportation. Many people fail to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit because they consider Him as an object instead of a person. The Holy Spirit is a person in the sense that He has knowledge, emotion, and will.²¹

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of action. And when there is fellowship with Him, ministry is fruitful. Every month at Full Gospel Church there is a constant flow of new converts to the church. Most of them have never heard of Jesus. In this case, their salvation must in a large way be attributable to the power of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives hope to those in despair, comfort and peace to those in sorrow, life and vitality to those in anguish and agony, and healing to those suffering

²⁰Ibid., 17-19.

²¹Paul Y. Cho, "Doctrine and Creed" (unpublished pamphlet), Office of Communications, Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea, 1991, 6.

from diseases.²²

In his book Prayer: Key To Revival, Paul Cho claims, "This fellowship with the Holy Spirit has brought me into every major change in my ministry. The development of the cell system came out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit in prayer. The founding of Church Growth International came out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit."²³

In 1976 the organization of Church Growth International was established at Full Gospel, and at their first meeting Cho was elected as Chairman. C.G.I. is involved in promoting world church growth, setting as an example successful pastors and churches based on the New Testament model of church growth. As an international organization with management, a board committee, and advisory committee with 70 pastors from 25 countries, its activities are held in Seoul and other cities in the world through holding C.G.I. conferences and seminars to educate church leaders and pastors. Participants from 40 countries have now reached 1.3 million.²⁴

Church Growth, a quarterly English language magazine, enjoys annual subscriptions from 100 countries. Paul Cho Ministries, a 30-minute program, which was begun by CGI-TV in January 1985 in the U.S.A., is aired every Sunday to 100 million viewers across the U.S.A. through 19 TV stations. All of those various outreach ministries were established as a result of Cho's fervent commitment to work

²²Ibid.

²³Paul Y. Cho, Prayer: Key To Revival (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1984), 45.

²⁴Ibid., 46-47.

in partnership with the Holy Spirit.²⁵

The Message and Church Growth: Step Three

In one word, the messages of Cho can be labeled as hope. The message of a pastor has the same function as cool water. Pastors are to lay the broken souls of those who have passed out because of sins, sorrow, afflictions, and meaningless lives, under the tree of God's love, and encourage them to build up a new life by giving them the lesson of living water through Jesus Christ. Where there is hope, there is faith. Only then, can lives become meaningful. The Bible says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18).²⁶

Cho claims that a pastor's message must be Christ-centered and also people-centered. They must relate to the real needs of people. One overwhelming criticism of Cho's messages is that they are simple and "full of Faith."²⁷

The doctrine of Full Gospel is characterized by the gospel of fullness which has its foundation in the unadulterated faith of the Word of God, standing on the basis of Christ-centered theology.²⁸

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Cho, "Doctrine and Creed," 8.

²⁷Ibid., 9.

²⁸Ibid.

The Five-fold Message of the Gospel

1. **Salvation.** The Gospel of Salvation is to be forgiven of sins, receive salvation and become children of God by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior, and to begin living a holy and pure life through the sealing and guidance of the Holy Spirit.²⁹

2. **Holy Spirit.** Christians born again of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5) receive the Holy Spirit; however, they can receive the fullness of the Spirit at the time of salvation or soon after salvation.³⁰

All who receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) receive power and are witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). They bring forth the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit through the fullness of the Holy Spirit in their lives and live a life which brings glory to God.³¹

3. **Divine Healing.** One of the ministries of Jesus Christ was healing and he promised, "And these signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18). Since Jesus "took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17), born again Christians have a duty as well as a privilege to pray for the sick.³²

4. **Blessing.** Believers who received salvation are redeemed from the

²⁹Ibid., 10.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

curse of the law by the grace of the cross (Gal. 3:13, 14). In addition, our Lord feeds and clothes believers who first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and when they live for the glory of God with honesty, faithfulness, diligence and loyalty, their life will be blessed that they may live in all sufficiency. They will live a life abundant enough to share with others. (1 Cor. 9:8).³³

5. **Second Coming of Jesus Christ.** We believe that Christ will come to earth again. The first time His coming will only be seen by His Chosen people, and the second time His coming will be seen by all people on the earth.³⁴ They shall attend the marriage feast of the lamb for seven years and reign in the kingdom for one thousand years. After the last judgment is given by Him who sits upon a great white throne, they will live a glorious life forever with God in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1).³⁵

The Three-fold Blessing of Salvation

The three-fold blessing involves practical aspects of the five-fold gospel (3 John 2). "Thy soul prospereth" means that by believing in Jesus Christ, we live an abundant life spiritually, and "thou mayest prosper" means that we are blessed with material things through a life in which all things work together for good. "Thou mayest be in health" means that a believer who has received salvation is blessed to be

³³Ibid., 11.

³⁴Ibid., 11-12.

³⁵Ibid.

delivered from the pain of sickness because Jesus paid the price of healing at Calvary.³⁶

Yoido Full Gospel Church believes its greatest mission is to preach the gospel of Christ to the whole world with the faith of the five-fold gospel message and the three-fold blessing of salvation.³⁷

This doctrine and creed of the Full Gospel Church is the center of their mission and message. Through sermon and seminar this philosophy of ministry has guided the church and its leadership as they are challenged to take this Gospel to the world.

Home Cells and Church Growth: Step Four

One of the reasons churches do not grow is that ministers are only fishing with a rod and reel instead of using the net as well. The net is the Home Cell system. The Full Gospel Church is organized in such a way that they could contact every member of the local church at any given time. Many churches have a large membership, but ministers do not know the true situation of each individual Christian. Nevertheless, the pastor preaches and the church thrives. However, once the pastor takes a vacation, the people stop attending. This is due primarily to a lack of organization. The cell system is an organization which every church should employ. The Full Gospel Church is known as one of the most organized churches in the world. However, when one takes a closer look at the ministry and operations of the

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

church, one will notice that they are organized for Missions.

In his book, Successful Home Cell Groups. Cho states, "One of the major problems of our society today is the depersonalization of human beings. With the increases in population, everyone becomes just a face in the crowd.... They feel alienated, lonely, aimless."³⁸

This problem, as Cho has stated, has also found its way into the traditional church. People come to church, and they feel lost in the crowd, in the organizational structures of our traditional church's involvement. This can never take place in the Program Base churches. People need to be cared for and ministered unto. This can be done in a most effective way through the Home Cell system. In Cho's church, five or ten families belong to one Home Cell. The Home Cell leaders and section leaders work together in the Home Cells. Even if the pastor organizes the system very tightly, it would be of no avail unless the Home Cells and section leaders do their jobs faithfully.³⁹

At the Full Gospel Central Church, seminars for Home Cell leaders are held twice a year. Home Cell leaders are trained differently. First, using the basis of Biblical truth, they are taught to realize the important and crucial role of leaders. The Bible is taught very explicitly in order that each leader, in turn, may teach the Word of God correctly to members in his Home Cell.⁴⁰

³⁸Cho, Successful Home Cell Groups, 49.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 50.

Each Home Cell leader is required to complete a three-month course at the Bible School for church layman, and a six-month course at the Bible College for church laymen. Even in an organized structure such as the Home Cell system, sometimes there will be a rupture in the net. Perhaps a Home Cell leader is not leading his cell according to biblical truth, or is leading the cell astray. If a flaw is found in the net, it must be repaired immediately. The pastor in charge of this particular district is responsible for the repairs. Pastors do their best in starting the Home Cell so people may grow and yield fruit in the community.⁴¹

One point to consider is that pastors must have goals to consider if that pastors must have goals to attain. The main reason the majority of pastors fail in their Home Cell ministry is they have not taken proper care of the cells once the cells have been organized. It might seem hard to set weekly, monthly, or even yearly goals, but it is essential for growth. One of the secrets of Full Gospel success is that leadership is not afraid of setting clearly defined goals. This is one of the secrets to their dynamic growth.

This ministry of Home Cells also allows the members of the church to care for each other in a more personal and intimate way. These friendships allow the members to share the joys and frustrations of life with one another. The members can pray together, study together, cry together, eat together, shop together, and witness together. In other words, the Home Cell members have a capacity to care for each other that can not be duplicated in large church structure. No matter how small

⁴¹Ibid.

a church membership may be, Home Cells are essential to its health.

Individuals who specialize in studying the positive and negative factors of outreach, and who nurture growth of a church, have discovered a very essential fact. This fact is that each church member needs a minimum of approximately seven individuals that they consider to be their friends in a church. The member also needs someone, preferably more than one individual, they consider to be a special friend. Studies indicate that if this doesn't occur, the member has a high rate factor if not attending church. Further studies demonstrate that most churches need to provide a model where love and friendships and a spirit of caring can be realized if they want to have a healthy congregation. Home Cell groups are a contributing force to this sense of belonging in the Christian community today. It is a ministry that is meeting the needs of the people. Home Cell groups are not to be confused with Bible study groups or fellowship groups. The main focus of Home Cells is to give each individual an opportunity to minister and to be ministered unto. It is established so a collective group can both nurture and evangelize in a given community. As was mentioned before, Home Cells are based on sound principles with a foundation in Scripture. Several passages demonstrate this fact.

It was to the homes that Jesus sent the twelve (Matt.10:11-13) and the seventy (Luke 10:1, 5-7). Another example is Paul (Acts 20:20). The New Testament mentions churches meeting in homes. For example, the church at Jerusalem had worship at the temple and worship in homes (Acts 2:46). Various individuals also had meetings in their homes: Lydia (Acts 16:40), Priscilla and Aquilla (Rom. 16:3-5;

Philem. 1-2) and Nymphas (Col. 4:15) are some that are mentioned in scripture.

For the Home Cell to be successful there is need for honesty in sharing. That is need for open-hearted friendliness and acceptance and there is need for a living relationship with the Word of God on the part of the Christian participants and particularly the group leaders. It is within this setting then that the beauty of Jesus, His character, His love and His word of hope and strength is revealed to humanity.

Home Cell groups give every church member an opportunity to participate in the ministry of the church and to bring revival to his/her own neighborhood. The Christians in Korea have found this kind of involvement very rewarding, and evangelism has multiplied because of it. The growth of churches around the world though the Home Cell system is a good indication that this movement back to the New Testament model of church growth is in progress.

The other side of evangelism is the back door of the church. Many churches complain that as many people are lost from the congregation through the back door as are won in revival meetings, and those churches are not growing. Well, there is practically no back door in the Home Cell group churches. The reason is that each Home Cell is like a family circle. Through these family circles people feel a sense of belonging, and they are kept in the church. On top of that, each cell leader watches over his or her flock, just as a hen watches over her little chicks. He is constantly caring for the needs of his flock. But at the same time, if one member of the group is absent from the church, the following day the leader calls to find out if anything is wrong. If there is a problem, he can deal with it immediately and do whatever is

possible to restore the individual back to the fold. Therefore, once a person joins the Home Cell group through joining the church, he is not likely to "fall through the cracks." Someone will always be watching out for him and caring for him through the daily trials and struggles of life.

Cho acknowledges the fact that it is impossible for him to have personal contact with all 600,000 members. Through the cell leaders he can have contact in a secondary way with them. Through the Home Cell groups the members are properly cared for, properly disciplined, properly fed and properly corrected when needed. Christians not only need sermons, they need fellowship and care. They need to be loved.

So the keys to Full Gospel's success is found in their commitment in prayer, their submission to the power of the Holy Spirit, a Gospel that is Christ-centered and people-directed, and an organization that bonds members through Home Cells.

CHAPTER 5

Contextualization and Church Growth

What all true contextualists have in common is the attempt to take the concrete human context in all its dimensions with utmost seriousness. The uniqueness of each milieu becomes the starting point for both the questions and the answers which will shape the evangelistic process and its aftermath in the life of the new church.

The questions that must be asked before authentic evangelism can take place are at least these: What is the nature of the human condition for these people in this place? What specific problems do they face? What does the gospel say about these issues? In answering these and related questions, the contextual approach will reject any time limits on the scope of its inquiry, but will instead insist on being as comprehensive as possible. It will include the spiritual focus of the evangelistic model, but also the social, economic, and political focus of the model. It is concerned with the individual, but also with the group and society as a whole. And it is concerned not only with problems which originate within a particular context, but also with the interlocking and interdependent structural problems of nations, regions, and the globe. In being so comprehensive, the contextual model ironically is taking more seriously than the evangelistic model the radicalness of the fall and the pervasiveness of its consequences. In being so comprehensive, contextualization also is taking more seriously than the evangelistic model the completeness of the gospel to address the entire human predicament rather than a subset of its problems.

But contextualization goes further; it suggests that in important ways the gospel's answer to the human predicament will be found within the context rather than outside. This is not to say that everything necessary for salvation is already present, but it is to say that God did not arrive for the first time when foreign missionaries came on the scene. Contextualization suggests that religions normally express responses to different degrees of divine revelation, and that the response is a varied and variable mixture of openness and rejection. The exact nature of the mix must be determined by inquiry, not by prejudgment. For instance, when missionaries arrived in many West African societies, they found already present an elaborate doctrine of the creator god. It would have been both foolish and theologically indefensible for those missionaries to try to reject as error the incomplete knowledge of God already there, rather, their approach was, quite correctly, to build on the existing foundation.

In the same way, contextualization insist that the chief agents of the gospel in any context must be full participants in the local society. Outsiders may be crucially needed to get the process started, but their role should be kept as small as possible, during their involvement, they should be as closely identified with the local people as possible.

A Bible based model of contextualization was made evident in the life of Christ. Jesus did not begin his official ministry until he was thoroughly inside the pious context of early first century Judaism. Jesus defined the needs and problems to be addressed, the goals to be aimed at, and the resources and means for attaining those goals in and from the context itself. Jesus worked on the basis of an

understanding, not of the needs of humanity in general, but of the needs of particular people at a particular time and in particular circumstances. The gospel he brought touched directly the needs of persons: it was sight for the blind, healing for the sick, freedom for captives, forgiveness for sinners, food for the poor, respect for the despised. Nor did he, as some claim, shrink from addressing social, political, and economic issues. The cleansing of the temple and Sadducees all had unmistakable systemic overtones.¹

The purpose of the chapter is to evaluate and point out several models of ministry that are operative today in the desire to experience contextualization on a practical basis. These models will represent schools of thought from the feminist, Latin-American, and African-American perspectives. This is not an exhaustive study, but it is presented in a manner so as to inform about the uniqueness and differences in each school of thought as they seek to establish paradigms of ministry.

Women-Church Model

Feminist theology and the feminist liberation movement are having a profound impact on the life and thought of the church. It is true that until recently, the struggle against patriarchalism and sexism has not achieved a distinctive institutionalization in the same sense that the black struggle against racism has institutionalized itself in the black churches and that the Latin American struggle against economic injustice and class oppression has institutionalized itself in the base ecclesial communities. But now a new form of institutionalization of the struggle is emerging that will prove to

¹Harvie M. Conn, "Contextualization," Evangelical Missions Quarterly 14 (1978: 39-46).

be of far reaching significance, namely, the women-church movement or feminist exodus communities that are forming both within and at the edges of existing church institutions. Rosemary Radford Ruether in an attempt to clarify the scope of the feminist agenda asserts:

The Feminist religious revolution thus promises to be more radical and far-reaching than Liberation theology. It reaches forward to an alternative that can heal the splits between masculine and feminine, between mind and body, between males and females as gender groups, between society and nature, and between races and classes.

One important aspect of this emerging feminist religion or spirituality is its recognition of the need for intentional communities of faith and worship. It is not enough to hold on ideology of criticism and social analysis as an interpretive base, or to participate in protest and action groups and organizations as vehicles of change. One needs communities of nurture to guide one through the symbolic order of patriarchy to rebirth into a new community of being and living.²

This feminist movement recognized that Christian feminists could no longer wait for the institutional churches to reform themselves enough to provide the vehicles of faith and worship that women need in this time. Ruether felt that women in contemporary churches are suffering from linguistic deprivation and Eucharistic famine.³ They can no longer nurture their souls in alienating words that ignore or systematically deny their existence. They are starved for words of life, for symbolic forms that fully and wholeheartedly affirm their personhood and speak truth about the evils of sexism and the possibilities of a future beyond patriarchy.⁴ This movement

²Rosemary Radford Ruether, Women-church (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 3.

³Ibid., 4.

⁴Ibid., 5.

also realized the need for primary communities that would nurture their journey into wholeness, rather than constantly negating and thwarting it. This call for new communities of faith and ritual assures that existing institutional churches do not have a monopoly on the words of truth or the power of salvation. Ruether supports this establishing of new communities by stating:

We do not form new communities lightly, but only because the crisis has grown so acute and the efforts to effect change so unpromising that we often cannot even continue to communicate within these traditional church institutions unless we have an alternative community reference that nurtures and supports our being.⁵

The problem that confronts the feminist is that the biblical model of ecclesia has been restrictive rather than inclusive and it has not provided a means for including women in its vision of liberation. In an attempt to support the establishing of feminist theology, Peter C. Hodgson asserts:

One of the crucial factors in supporting the advocacy of a Christian feminist theology has been the discovery that the Christian movement was at its point of origin radically egalitarian and inclusive, representing a subversive reversal of prevailing social patterns in the founding of Christianity and in early church leadership. While repatriarchalization occurred very quickly, and along with it the emergence of misogynist attitudes, the "clearing of freedom" that occurred at the very beginning provides a basis for advancing theological claims concerning the essence of the ecclesial community, a transfigured, liberated, inclusive community.⁶

The feminist movement seeks to establish its validity by laying some historical and theological foundations for understanding the church as a community of liberation from patriarchy. In order to distinguish itself from the assertion that it is just another

⁵Ibid.

⁶Hodgson, Revisioning the Church, 81.

separatist entity, the feminist movement has developed a feminist theology that affirms their role in the body of Christ. They make the point that the early church was inclusive of women in the development of their christian communities. Spiritual gifts were given by the spirit to the members of the body without restrictions based on gender. Ruether in support of this premise continues:

The models of Early Christian ministry were charismatic. They were based on the belief that the Spirit of prophecy restored in Messianic times was present in their midst, manifest through powers of ecstatic revelations, exorcism, and healing. These early charismatic concepts of ministry tended to include women, first, because a ministry of charismatic gifts by definition affirms spiritual talents directly, rather than mediating them through appropriate leadership dictated by gender or other established social hierarchies.⁷

As the Church moved further away from the new testament model of inclusion, the women in the church were regulated as subordinates in the community of faith. Reformers who spoke against the status quo were heralded as heretics. In Puritanism, the conflict was between charismatic and institutional concepts of church and ministry and its implications for excluding or including women in leadership. Puritan theology distinguished between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. In the covenant of grace, all humans were equal before God. In the covenant of works, however, God had ordained a fixed social order of men over women, masters over servants, parents over children.⁸ In early Quaker theology, the covenant of grace restores the original of all persons in the image of God. Grace

⁷Ruether, Women-Church, 6.

⁸Ibid., 17.

abolishes all class and gender distinctions, particularly in religious functions.⁹ In the redeemed humanity, the Spirit of prophecy will be poured out on the despised of the present world, and they will teach and prophesy. Women will be emancipated and given an equal place as leaders in the community of the new humanity.¹⁰ The Church as Spirit filled community thus believes itself called into an exodus from the established social order and its religious agents of sacralization. This exodus from the realm of patriarchy views basic Christian communities as their ecclesial expression of liberation theology. It is here that liberation theology is actualized. Basic Christian communities are gatherings of Christians who have already declared an option for the poor of society and who seek to reflect on the gospel in light of this commitment to create a just society.¹¹ The New Testament church also defined itself as an exodus of the people of God from all historical conditions of servitude, demonic possession, sin, and death. Ruether, in explaining the women-church model, asserts:

Women-Church represents the first time that women collectively have claimed to be church and have claimed the tradition of the Exodus community as a community of liberation from patriarchy. This means that patriarchy is rejected as God's will. Women-Church means not only that women have rejected this system and are engaged in efforts to escape from it, but that they are doing so collectively. Patriarchy has typically split women from women, across generational lines, mother-in-law from daughter-in-law in the patriarchal family, mother from daughter, women isolated in one household from women isolated in another household, women from the ruling class from those in the servant class. It has taught contempt for women, internalizing self-contempt

⁹Ibid., 18.

¹⁰Ibid., 22.

¹¹Ibid., 23-25.

and mistrust of each other.¹²

The first step in forming the feminist exodus from patriarchy is to gather women together to articulate their own experience and communicate it with each other. The need for separation to define their existence isn't to be seen as separatism. It should however, should be seen as women coming together in a feminine environment that would allow them to define their history and self worth.

"Separation is seen as only a stage in a process, a stage that is absolutely necessary but not an end in itself, but a stage toward a further end in the formation of a critical culture and community of women and men in exodus from patriarchy. One should be very clear that when one talks about women with-drawing to collectivize their own experience and form a critical counterculture to patriarchy, for most women this means at best, a few hours a week taken out of their lives lived in the presence of males.¹³ Women-Church is the Christian theological expression of this stage of feminist collectivization of women's experience and the formation of crucial culture. In this context, they empower themselves and are empowered by this liberated spirit upon which they are grounded to celebrate this new community, to commune with it, and to nurture themselves and be nurtured in the community of liberated sisterhood. Ruether believes when males are liberated from a repressive community they themselves have often supported, it would be a total liberation for the body, thus we

¹²Ibid., 57-58.

¹³Ibid., 60.

would no longer need the term women-church but just Church.¹⁴ Ruether sees the importance of forming community for study, prayer, community action, and group empowerment.¹⁵

When a group of people decide they wish to gather together to form an exodus community from patriarchy, they should first spend sometime together thoroughly discussing the meaning of their action, theologically and ecclesially, and setting goals together. This might take the form of evening discussions over several weeks, culminating in a covenant-forming relationship where the kind of community they want to form is agreed upon and celebrated. Discussion should include questions like these: Do we want primarily a discussion group or a consciousness-raising group? Will we share our stories and reflect on our personal experiences? Will this become a theological study group? Do we want to be a worship community? How often will we meet and what is our goal?¹⁶ As the community decides what sort of study, worship, and action elements it wishes to incorporate in its life, organizational plans can be developed. Ruether asserts that the exodus out of the institutional Church into the feminist base community would be for the sake of creating a freer space from which to communicate new possibilities to the institutional church. The relationship between the two becomes a creative dialogue rather than a schismatic impasse.¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid., 63.

¹⁵Ibid., 93-95.

¹⁶Ibid., 122.

¹⁷Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 205-06.

This discussion of feminist base community describes what it would mean to become Church if one were truly free and empowered to do so. Base communities need not regard themselves as better than others, rather they should recognize that no part of the Church, no part of the world, is liberated until we are all liberated.¹⁸ Women Church, as long as it remains true to its own vision, can be viewed as a paradigm of what the Church as a whole should become—a sign and sacrament of ecclesial wholeness beyond all patriarchy clericalism, sexism, and all remnants of oppression.

African-American Model

First and foremost, the contemporary African-American church is the citadel of faith for the African-American community. Nothing claims the attention and devotion of African-American people in terms of sheer numbers as the African-American church. In a day of congregational mergers and nose-diving memberships in many churches of the dominant society, there is hardly a whisper of any significant decline in African-American circles. A vital dynamic that contributes to the staying power of the African-American church is the truth implied earlier. Nowhere is the African-American community so completely in charge of its decision making as in the African-American church. Sociologists may view this as a valid response to the overwhelming influence exerted by the dominant society in every other arena of endeavor. This dynamic, coupled with the innate religiosity of the African-American psyche, has contributed much to the continuity and longevity of the African-American church enterprise.

¹⁸Ibid., 213.

All across this land, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in great cities and rural hamlets, on the Lord's Day the majority of African-American people are at worship. In communal fashion, African-American people reestablish their personhood that has been brutalized during their week-long pilgrimage in white racist America. It has been the African American church, in this day as in days past, which has enabled African-American people to keep the faith.

A recurring criticism of African-American church life or style is that it is other worldly in theological stance. This criticism implies that relevancy to the real world is suspect. When one considers the social context of African-American people, early or late, and what this world imposes upon African-Americans, it is no wonder that the character of religious practice is other worldly. Though the expression of religious faith is otherworldly, the evidence is, decidedly, this-worldly.

Collectively, the African-American church enterprise is an economic entity of massive proportions when compared to the other financial efforts within the African-American community. It goes without saying that the African-American preacher may indeed be the most skillful businessman the race has produced.

The contemporary African-American church does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in a specific context. That specific context has much to do with its form and shape and function. The African-American church has been deemed a segregated church. That is an imprecise description. The authentic African-American church is indeed a separate Church but it is separation by necessity. The African-American

church has remained African-American in constituency because the attempts at integrating the kingdom of Christ were always a one-way street and such attempts were suspect. Though the African-American church remains open to all and any who would care to seek Christ through its ministrations, very few candidates from the white community ever apply. The contemporary African-American church remains separate principally because of the specific context mentioned. The context of the African-American church is white racist America. Consider the track record. African-American people absorbed two hundred and forty-four years of the vilest form of human bondage in the history of the world. The mission then of the African-American church is to be the center of resistance against racism and oppression.

When it comes to the challenge of evangelizing the African-American church as one approaches the twenty-first century, Carlyle Fielding Stewart informs us that:

Ministry based on prophetic principles can help urban black pastors develop viable black congregations. But in order to increase membership, black urban churches, in particular must develop a mission land ministry which speaks to the vital concerns of the communities they serve.¹⁹

The African-American church is a church that is prophetic in nature and content. In a way that clarifies the meaning of prophetic ministry, Stewart asserts:

The process of calling the people of God into an awareness of God's saving, liberating and redemptive acts so as to compel the radical participation of individuals and communities in spiritual, social and personal transformation. The result of that transformation will be the realization of human wholeness and potential in the present, as well as the future.²⁰

¹⁹Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, African American Church Growth (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 21.

²⁰Ibid., 22.

In the context of African-American church growth that are certain presuppositions needed in order to realize this growth. Stewart presents these basic tenets for African-American church as the foundation blocks for successful ministry. These four prophetic foundations include: Passion-compassion, conviction, investment, and vision.²¹ Passion is seen as the fuel which empowers the messenger to bring forth the word with power. This passion must not only be identified in the pastor, but it must also be evident in the people. The church must see herself as a powerful life force which energizes the community in which they minister. In speaking of prophetic passion as a foundation for ministry, one must never identify emotions alone as a prerequisite for passion. To be a passionate church is to be a caring church. A passionate church must also be a self-loving community. When the African-American church speaks of self-love, she is speaking about the importance of self acceptance. Stewart simply states this principle by affirming that if a black church is to grow prophetically in a black community, the congregation must identify with the culture of African American people and implement aspects of that culture in church life.²²

The second tenet for African-American church growth is conviction. Conviction is simply the irrepressible desire or will to live the Word through human experience. It is the persuasion that empowers human action and is strongly based upon faith and belief. Passion without conviction is like an engine without oil or a

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 26.

car without fuel.²³ Convictions are wedded very closely to beliefs.

African-American clergy who are great leaders understand the importance of conviction. In order to experience lasting growth a preacher must be willing to have strong convictions even in the face of strong objections. He must be willing to place his job on the line in order to lead out in this type of prophetic ministry.

Stewart believes that one must be willing to face forces, powers, and principalities that would seek to stifle the growth of the church from within as well as without.²⁴ In order to be true to ones calling, conviction must be part and parcel of ones prophetic qualities. It is, at times Ames, most difficult for a preacher to project his convictions for truth when he must also face the fact that the congregation pays the bills. However, this should not be a stumbling block for one who is stabilized by a prophetic ministry of conviction. The third tenet of a strong prophetic ministry is a dedication to prophetic investment. When one speaks about investment, one must not confuse the term with financial but rather personal investment.²⁵ In order to change the crippling drug problems in the African-American community, it is necessary to establish one's priestly function through the ministry of presence.²⁶ Without the proper investment of time, care, and resources available to those in the surrounding community it is plausible that a church will achieve only nominal, if any, growth. In

²³Ibid., 27.

²⁴Ibid., 30.

²⁵Ibid., 33.

²⁶Ibid.

order to experience dynamic church growth, one must invest time and energy in the African-American community.

The fourth and final characteristic of prophetic ministry is vision. With passion and compassion for God's people, a willingness to stand on justice and truth through firm convictions, coupled with an investment of self, comes the honing of the prophetic vision. The prophetic church must have a sense of mission and ministry.²⁷ Like the prophets of old, the African-American preacher must be a seer for God. A person with vision and wisdom to formulate this vision into action. A great leader must have a plan in which to mobilize the masses for ministry.

The ability to anticipate, to expect, to envision, and to implement God's vision for the people is a critical component of prophetic ministry and a useful aid in promoting church growth.²⁸ When these tenets are merged in an attempt to do ministry in the African-American context, genuine church growth will be experienced. Once the foundation has been set for African-American norms of African-American culture, the necessity of retaining those cultural norms will that make the African-American Church truly African.²⁹ The first norm is to value our existence and not to feel burdened about apologizing for our history. Worship must also be experienced from the African-American perspective. African-American worship by nature has been and still is a service rich in celebration. In the African-American experience, the call to celebrate is done with such unrehearsed, undirected, joyful enthusiasm as

²⁷Ibid., 35.

²⁸Ibid., 38.

²⁹Ibid., 40.

to amaze most other churches. What is it that makes African-Americans so joyful, so supremely happy? Why do they make so much noise about Christ and their joy in their Lord? What is it that holds them in church often all day on Saturday or Sunday from week to week?

Firstly, African-Americans meet to celebrate the sovereignty of God. When you see them crying and falling into one another's arms and shouting "Thank You, Jesus," they are not acting any more inappropriately than did the children of Israel after God led them through the Red Sea. That was not a time for quietude. This celebration in worship is at the heart of the African-American church, for it is the only act of worship that no other body claims or attempts in the African-American tradition and manner. They meet to celebrate because the church is a survival institution. All people may enter through an open door that no one can shut.

The African-American church is only viable as she remains true to her cultural norms that have nourished her through a world blatant in racism and oppression.

Stewart concludes his model of African-American church growth by sharing his twelve principles for prophetic ministry. These principles are namely:

1. Celebrate life through Christ and the mission and ministry of the church. Inspire people to celebrate through worship value gifts, graces, presence, and input.
Consecrate people for service. Motivate people to examine their lives and communities in ways that lead to positive transformation.
2. Invite people to participate and belong in the fellowship and ministry of the church.
3. Inform people of ways their lives can be transformed and enhanced through the church.
4. Clarify needs, values, direction, purpose.

5. Creatively Confront evil or problem areas that can be found in the church's ministry.
6. Comfort those suffering, in pain, broken, alienated. Restore them to life and wholeness.
7. Investigate/Observe facts and context of biblical and contemporary reality.
8. Interpret ways to shed new light on role impact of African culture on Christian developments. Innovate programs.
9. Apply Christian principles and precepts, and teach others.
10. Proclaim the good news of Christ by developing programs that reach community and congregation.
11. Propagate/Communicate programs of church in community.
12. Participate in programs and encourage others to belong.³⁰

In order to experience genuine growth in the African-American context, a model is needed to activate and challenge the laity with the demands of ministry. The model as articulated by Carlyle Fielding Stewarts seeks to confront the clergy and community with the demands of doing ministry in the African-American prophetic style.

Latin-American Model

Latin American liberation theology has had a profound impact on all major theological topics, including questions of method, anthropology, Christology, and the theology of history, but its most creative contribution has come at the point of ecclesiology. Latin American theology is interested in liberating the real world from its wretched state, since it is this objective situation that has obscured the meaning of

³⁰Stewart, 151-52.

faith. The characteristic thing about Latin American theology, however, is not the creation or development of explanatory models but the call for the transformation of the sinful condition. In brief, Latin American theology is a call for transformation. The theological concern is not to explain the essence of sin, or the dilemma of human existence in such a world. The concern is to change the sinful situation. In contrast, European theology is generally concerned about the meaning of life and how this meaning can be clarified in theological thought. Latin American theology is only concerned with a faith that can be mobilized into action. Jon Sobrino crystallizes this most important theology by stating:

Latin American theology is regarded not so much as an explanatory schema in which the data of revelation and the data of history are integrated in a consistent way as it is a pattern of response to widespread suffering. The reflection that suffering stimulates is not essentially an effort to explain the nature of suffering or to investigate its compatibility with the data of revelation, it is an effort to eliminate the suffering. An analysis of the causes of the widespread suffering is not excluded, indeed it is demanded. This shows once again the importance of the social sciences. However, the perspective is different: the issue is not the truth or formal beauty of these analyses but the elimination of the suffering.³¹

Latin American theology gives a privileged place to the cries of the oppressed. Theology is not just seen as a process of thought, but rather a catalyst for action. This action must be redemptive in removing the causes of suffering in society that keep the people in poverty and oppression. Latin American theology seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, thought and reality, theology and the response through action. The transformation of society through community action takes place

³¹Jon Sobrino, The True Church and the Poor (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 29.

in the very context of human suffering. Latin American theologians see the need of being in the midst of the people in order to not only deal with the pain, but also to be with the oppressed as they experience the pain together in the process of healing. This community of faith is seen as redemptive in nature. The preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God is seen by liberationists as the vehicle to galvanize the people of God into action in preparing for this event. This point is clarified by Sobrino when he asserts:

What is said of Jesus must also be said of his hearers. It might theoretically have been possible for the practice of Jesus to have required of others not a historical practice but a simple doctrinal acceptance of a truth or a hope in the coming of the Kingdom. But this was not the norm his practice took. Jesus' statements about the need for conversion and following, his preaching of the commandment of love, are enough to show that an objective conformity to the coming Kingdom could not take the form of pure faith or pure hope. Now that the Kingdom is coming, change is required. The closer this Kingdom is and the more its coming is God's doing, the more must human beings conform to it by a radical change in their way of life.³²

In order to properly prepare for the coming of this Kingdom, one must see the need of opening ones life to the possibilities of ministering to others. Latin American theology realizes the importance of following in the pattern of Christ as he accepted his mission to minister to the oppressed masses. Not only did Jesus minister with love, but also with Justice. Justice seeks to change the very oppressive force that allow the Ach to monopolize the poor. Sobrino views Justice as a powerful characteristic of love which is initiated through service. This process of love is not free from persecution, rather it attracts persecution to validate its willingness to

³²Ibid., 45.

love.³³ Genuine love, of course, implies a readiness to suffer, and this suffering may be very great.³⁴ Sin in its historical reality shows its might and power against those who practice justice. Taking up one's cross becomes an unavoidable necessity and turns the life of one who promotes justice into a journey very like that of Jesus, a journey that ends in some kind of historical cross and death.³⁵ Latin American liberationist are well aware that the basic demand of love is to be willing to follow in the very practice of justice. In this regard, it is a path that leads to suffering and death. The practice of justice is, therefore, a basic material demand of the gospel. Without it the gospel would be void of real substance and meaning. The gospel according to liberationists is a message that makes demands upon their lives. In its concrete historical form the practice of justice demands not only that one give of ones abilities and talents but also that one give of ones life.³⁶ Latin American theology is greatly concerned about focusing on the mission of the Church as practiced in the life of Christ. When the content of mission is determined by the community, support is given to the idea that mission takes priority ova the structures of religious life.³⁷ In order to properly represent the demands of the gospel, one must not put any credence in lip service, but one must see the need of personalizing mission in concrete ways.

³³Ibid., 52.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 53.

³⁶Ibid., 58.

³⁷Ibid., 80.

The Church in Latin American theology is viewed as the Church of the poor. The Church of the poor recognizes that Christ is alive and he breathes new breath into the lives of the people. It is called the resurrected church because it has broken away from the traditional ways of being Church.³⁸ The Church was only seen as a building made of brick and mortar, not as the people ministering to others in the context of Community. The Church of the poor is the resurrection of the New Testament church. Clearly, then, there is a correlation between the resurrection of Christ and the Use of the Church in terms of their renewed focus for a contextual ministry.³⁹ Sobrino shares his thoughts in regards to the Church for the poor by stating:

For this profound reason I maintain that the Church of the poor is not a Church for the poor but a Church that must be formed on the basis of the poor and that must find in them the principles of its structure, organization, and mission. For the same reason I maintain that this Church does not conceive of the poor as "part" of itself, even a privileged part, but thinks of them rather as the "center" of the whole.⁴⁰

The important thing about the Church of the poor is that they have been recognized as a channel for conversion. The poor keep alive the question of God, of his Kingdom, of Christ, of love, justice, and sin.⁴¹ The Church of the poor helps the people of God to be correct in terms of their mission to the oppressed of Latin America. In the Church of the poor the age old barriers between hierarchy and

³⁸Ibid., 84.

³⁹Ibid., 87.

⁴⁰Ibid., 93.

⁴¹Ibid., 97.

faithful, priests and workers, peasants and intellectuals have been broken down.⁴² They have not been broken down by mere theological reflection, but by following the biblical injunction in bearing one another's burdens. The Church of the poor acknowledges, accepts, and requires that the bishop be the unifying head of the diocese and exercise the ministry of unity.

This ministry becomes truly unifying only when the bishop hears the voice of the people. The leaders in Latin America did not bring information and concepts to the people, rather these emerged from the groups themselves through a process of dialogue. These communities of action and liberation in Latin America are called base communities.⁴³ The word base denotes that this movement of liberation is organized from the bottom up. They emerged in Brazil in the late fifties and early sixties as a lay evangelization movement among the poor that arose as a result of a shortage of priests and an alienation from the hierarchical upper class church, which was part of the oppressive power structure. Although this was a revolution from below, a genuine grass roots movement, its leaders often came from the privileged and educated classes.⁴⁴ Their leaders in a true spirit of solidarity, relinquished their class privileges in order to be with them in their struggles. It is from the context of the base Christian communities that the Church sought to break down barriers that separate bishops, priests, and laity.

⁴²Ibid., 103.

⁴³Hodgson, 73.

⁴⁴Ibid., 74-75.

The mission of the church is also the evangelization of the masses.

Evangelization that does not consider the cultural context is a faulty evangelism.

Latin America models of church challenges the blatant uniformities that have been forced upon them by the European conception of evangelization without regard to contextualization.⁴⁵

When evangelization is only conceived as preachment, and not as a vehicle to restore liberation and wholeness to a suffering people, evangelization is then suspect. One must not only confess Christ, but also to continue the saving deeds of Christ in reconciling the world unto himself. The problem with European theology today, is her failure to merge proclamation with practice.⁴⁶ The Church is not only to transmit the saving knowledge of Jesus, but also his saving actions.⁴⁷ According to Sobrino, evangelization must be processed in three forms: (1) through verbal proclamation of the good news; (2) through the witness of Christian life; and (3) through a transforming practice.⁴⁸ In Latin American theology, liberation must be seen as a goal in evangelism. This goal must be made evident through the power of transforming lives and institutions. In order to be a successful evangelist, one must be willing to give one's life for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. It is in the context of the poor that the people of God have the privilege to practice the love of

⁴⁵Sobrino, 225.

⁴⁶Ibid., 256-58.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 266-68.

Jesus in a concrete way. The Church in Latin America makes this model of evangelization a reality only to the degree that they continue in the missionary model of the Master.

Critique and Reflections

In retrospect it appears that each model has some important elements to make it appealing and necessary, yet there are equally obvious deficiencies that require scrutiny and amendment, especially when ideas and emphases are taken to excess. The Women-church model, seeking to emphasize its validity by laying some historical and theological foundation for its desire to be free from the oppressive patriarchal chains that have bound it needs a counterbalancing stress on the importance of building Christian communities with the unchurched. As feminists struggle for inclusion and equal participation in the Church, it is most important that they keep in clear focus, the mission and ministry of Christ. Without arguing the importance of liberation in the biblical context, it is however, necessary to assert that the Gospels are replete with examples of liberation from the societal chains of sexism, racism, patriarchalism, classism, and oppression. While feminists seek to build their communities from the already disenfranchised in the community of the believers, it is equally important that they build spiritually based ministries to the disenfranchised in the world. One does not seek to assert that quantitative growth is superior to qualitative growth. This would be both futile and self defeating. It is only when the Church becomes faithful to the claims of the Gospel as well as the demands of the gospel, that genuine growth can occur. It is also important to note that the Feminist

movement in America would need to contextualize its model in order to be effective in the Korean model. The Korean model was effective, namely, because of its ability to tap the nurturing and mothering skills of women in building strong Christian communities. Cho realized that his female members had the gifts of evangelism and nurture, and he combined these talents in order to expand the Kingdom of God. In Korean culture, the woman is not considered the dominant individual in society. The Patriarchal system still exists even until this period in history. However, Cho allowed the mothering skills to exist in the context of home cells and later experienced phenomenal growth, both qualitative and quantitative. As feminists seek equality in the context of the existing church structures, they should take advantage of their mothering skills in mission and ministry. It would also be helpful for the Feminist Theologians to take a closer look at the need to further discuss the gap between the African American female and her male counterpart. Society from a historical context has tried to drive a wedge of mistrust between both of these oppressed groups in our community. As White feminists desire to be emancipated from their male counterparts, African-American males and females are in need of reconciliation and healing. Genuine church growth and renewal will be experienced when these issues are addressed in a sincere attempt to build stronger Christian communities on a greater inclusive model.

The African-American model, with its emphasis on building strong prophetic ministries, when applied to the church's outreach must be supplemented with an emphasis on the value of the individual and his need to build stronger relationships

outside of the structure of the worship service. When the Church becomes the field in which to work instead of the community, the church is in danger of moving towards isolationism. The Church is the base for both qualitative and quantitative growth, not the place where it is to be experienced. The Church is the service station and not the highway of action. When the building complex and the church constituency become the field in which to work rather than a force with which to work, the church is in trouble. Admittedly, a program of Christian growth and development is essential in the training of the young and in the instruction of new converts. Perhaps the church should return to the New Testament pattern and follow the simple plan of evangelism used by the earliest followers of Christ.

The basic premise undergirding the advance of Christianity is that the church must accept responsibility for carrying the message of Christ to people outside the four walls of the church building. Since church growth depends on the winning of converts, and it is evident that ministry within the church alone can never reach the masses, Christians must be concerned about converts from the community. Far too long within the African-American church, the ministry of evangelism has been limited within the building complex and the present church constituency. It is time for the church to build bridges of outreach, not walls of isolation. Church ministries should be designed to expand the church beyond the building complex and take the message of saving grace to the community. Church extension enables leadership to generate spiritual enthusiasm for active participation in Christ's commission and involves the whole Christian family in God's plan of reaching, teaching, winning and developing.

It gives an essential motivation to "Go out into the highways and hedges and urge and constrain them to come in, so that my house may be filled" (Luke 12:43 NIV). The Church growth emphasis is dual: the multitudes outside the Church must be reached with the Christian gospel, and the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit must be appropriated to enable the Church to accomplish this task.

The Church was not born to be a hospital for saints or a social club for sinners. Its very existence indicates God's purpose: to evangelize the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against God's church because it is God's primary instrument for winning the world. God gave, Christ gave and the Spirit was given to man to enable him to give his best to the Lord's work. God is not willing that any should perish but His desire is that all men come to a saving knowledge of His son and become involved in the fellowship of the Church.

The Church is not sent to save the world, the community, or the family; her mission is to bring the saving gospel to individuals. The spirit of God deals with the world, the community, and the Church usually in groups to prepare the way for the Word of God. The Word then speaks to individuals. Men are born one at a time and they must be born again one at a time. This suggests a dangerous misconception about "mass" evangelism. Actually, "mass" evangelism is a misnomer. What happens is "simultaneous" soul winning decisions. Evangelism is actually personal in nature. Great waves of revival have circled the African-American communities, but for the most part the personal and practical aspects of evangelism have not been truly understood. The true elements of soul winning were lost in the popularity of the

African-American preacher and in the vastness of the congregation. Preachers still Journey from church to church rather than house to house. Some African-American clergy attempt to reverse the New Testament pattern by inviting everyone to one place so they can be saved rather than taking the gospel to where the people are. In such cases, the base of operation becomes the field of operation. This drastically, if not entirely, limits the outreach of the church. The preaching of the gospel, the teaching of the Word, the singing of hymns, the praying and the Christian fellowship in the church should create a force to send the membership into the whitened fields of harvest. The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Christ-like men and women ought to be moved with compassion at the multitudes who are scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

Evangelism was never intended to be carried on inside the church building. Only a few of the lost enter the sanctuary at the time of worship or on special occasions. Unless, the African-American Church quickly reinstitutes the concept of mission outreach into the communities, the lost world can never be won. Theology, worthy of the name in any context, is intensely practical and personal. This necessitates the need of the African-American clergy to review their stand on the meaning of the Church and her mission to a dying world. The rediscovery of the doctrines of Spiritual Gifts and Christian Calling is needed in the African-American church more than ever before. Historically, as a people of struggle, the African-American clergy were more than just pastor or preacher. They were considered the genuine motivators and enablers in the community. Much emphasis was put into

rebuilding families that had been separated because of slavery and injustice. Today, more than ever before, the clergy's presence is needed in the community to deal with problems including: Black on Black crimes, gang violence, drugs, teenage pregnancies, alcoholism, joblessness, lack of a male presence in the home, school drop-outs, the break-up of the family, domestic violence, and the feeling of hopelessness that comes to any community with a lack of genuine concern and spiritual direction. This is prophetic ministry in the highest degree. Paul Cho saw the need in Korea to minister to the personal needs of the church and community through the context of Home cells. He realized the importance of breaking down his congregation into small groups so that every member could be ministered unto and also given the opportunity to minister. Cho understood that genuine evangelism can take place in and through the church only when leaders cease their futile efforts to control and regulate the Spirit and allow the Spirit to anoint them and thrust them forth into a needy world. The Church does not manage the commission. The Holy Spirit, through conversion, commission and commitment, directs the only adequate ministry of the church in the world. This Home Cells concept allows the African-American church to be re-connected to their extended family roots. In order for Home Cells to be activated in the African American church, the pastor must play the central role of enabler and motivator. Cho was able to employ a staff of ministers in order to oversee the operations of the cells. This model, however, would need to be contextualized in the African-American church, because of the long history of influence that the clergy has in the saved community of believers. Notwithstanding

the limitations of budgetary restraints, the African-American clergy is still the pivotal personality in the life of the community. This gives him natural validation needed in order to present ministries in the process of spiritual and economic revitalization. In the African-American church the parishioners still look to leadership for guidance and direction. This leadership, however, must involve the total mobilization of the people of God in the process of making more disciples for the Kingdom of God. The problem of the Sunday-oriented congregation limited to the building facility is of major consequence to church growth. If the church building complex can be the base of operation and the community can be the field in which to work, then the two can go together. But when the church building facility becomes both the base and the field, a serious problem of church growth is evident. Today, a large portion of the members of our African-American churches need to be ministered unto, but also to be channels of ministry. When the African-American minister takes advantage of this shared concept of ministry through the model of home cells, church growth will be genuine and effective. Although Carlyle Stewart speaks in eloquent terms of prophetic ministry in the African-American context, no mention of spiritual gifts is either offered or articulated. The teaching of the "Priesthood of all Believers," is missing and unaccounted for in his thesis. He mentions the Body of Christ, but no ministry for the body is clearly mentioned. Too much emphasis is put on the clergy in terms of its function with very little instruction given to the role of the laity in the building of community. It is impossible to identify the African-American church without mentioning the natural gifts of the Spirit that takes place in the context of the

African- American community in totality. This is why small groups play such a vital role in African-American churches, because they provide opportunity for close relationships and the opportunity for ministry and discipleship. The African-American clergyperson who seeks to be viable for the twenty-first century must involve the laity in ministry or, like the dinosaur, they will become extinct. Stewart sees the church as a building and centers activities around a building.

African-Americans, however, join specific churches because they feel that their needs are being met and also that they desire involvement in the proclamation of the gospel.

As the African-American clergy rediscovers the need of doing ministry based on a balance of biblical principles, church growth will then become the natural lifestyle of both clergy and people.

Conversely, Latin American theology, with its emphasis on the problems facing their country in terms of poverty and oppression needs to include in its concerns the plight of the oppressed female. Both the women's liberation movement and the Latin-American movement are spearheaded by those who are concerned about the suffering of the powerless and the poor, but all of black theology's spokesmen are among the powerless and the oppressed. They do not have to assume identification with the struggle, for their blackness makes them one with the despised whether they will it or not. In women's liberation theology, the white female has the privilege to disappear into the world of the white male without retribution. This however is not the privilege of the African-American woman. Her badge of blackness is a constant reminder that she is a perpetual member of the community of the oppressed without

privilege of escape. Black Theology with its desire to hear from God in the midst of a racist society, along with Latin American Theology and its fight against classism, joined by Feminist theology and its journey away from sexism, all have their rightful concerns in the arena of theology. Latin American models of church growth challenge the blatant uniformities that have been forced upon them by the European concept of evangelization without regard to contextualization. When evangelization is only conceived as a preachment and not as a vehicle to restore liberation and wholeness to a suffering people, the Kingdom needs to be built. The mission of home cells is to establish the Kingdom of God's love in every home. Jesus has always existed in community. He is always existing in relation to others. In other words, whatever model happens to fit in any particular social setting, the need remains for that model to be evaluated and corrected by referring to the form of the church viewed in its scriptural matrix.

CHAPTER 6

Home Cells in Perspective: Summary and Conclusion

Strong and growing churches are churches that enjoy the kind of pastoral leadership portrayed in the New Testament. Pastors differ in respect to gifts and personalities as leaders in the early church did, but they understood their mandate and the roles that accompanied it, and they were committed to discharging all its duties. Coupled with trust in the Holy Spirit to empower God's servants for the work given them, this personal acceptance of the wide range of demands that accompany church leadership is fundamental for pastors and those whose ministries need renewal.

Any place in the world where the gospel is moving forward and churches are growing, will demonstrate Christian leadership that reflects this teaching. By the same token, churches concerned only with internal matters will evidence breakdowns in pastoral leadership, lack of courage, and failure to discharge the evangelistic dimensions for the pastoral office in the public arena.

It takes time before the average congregation develops enough concern for outreach that it is willing to be neglected in order that the lost and unchurched be served and saved. It is the universal experience of pastors that congregations tend to monopolize the pastor's time. In the minds of some members, the pastor never does enough for them. Therefore, he/she must patiently and persistently teach the leaders along with the entire membership that his calling and theirs includes building a sense of family in the community at large. This is an educational process and it is very

important for the pastor's ministry. Teaching people to replace their old models with new ones is not an easy task. However, if the church is going to ever pattern itself after the New Testament model, it must start today.

It is abundantly clear that the traditional church with its program oriented model is insufficient in meeting the needs of a fast growing population. It is only when a theological understanding of the church is attained that the call to "build people" will be properly understood.

The need to build close relationships in our communities must be realized and will give strength and meaning to our lives. In a world that seeks to treat its citizens as a nameless group of people, it is important that this attitude does not manifest itself in the christian community.

Since ones theology of God and His church gives birth to how ones plan the mission of the church, should make certain that one's model is based on a clear biblical understanding of how Christ defines the Church. Since He is the head of the church and the builder of the church, one should allow Him to set the pattern.

The view of evangelism set forth in this project is conceived in terms of God and His model primarily, and of man and his methods only secondarily. It affirms that what man says and does in evangelism must be determined by what God is doing, and that the divine message itself must determine the aims and methods of the human messengers, since Church growth is not what we do but rather what God through His Spirit does through the believers.

In Acts. the Jesus model is worked out in the ministries of the apostles.

There we find the model from which all who bear office take their cue. The disciples were taught and trained by Jesus in the atmosphere of small intimate groups. They were later led by the Holy Spirit in such a manner that their ministries as well as their words remain models for the church in all ages. Peter and Paul, moved back and forth between disciplining believers and evangelizing the lost.

Peter, who was exhorted by the risen Lord to "pastor my little sheep" (John 21:16), is later pulled by the Spirit to do cross-cultural evangelism in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). Paul's ministry blended evangelism, pastoral care, church organization, and theological instruction. In Acts 20:17-38, Paul lays before the elders of the church at Ephesus the course of his ministry among them as an example for them to follow. He had blended ministry to Jews and to the Greeks, public testimony, and house-to-house visitation.

If the Christian church is to attend to its essential task of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations of the world, the place where that mission must begin is in the local congregation. This means that every church community, however small, and every member of it who dares to claim the name of Christ must ask these basic questions:

1. Is the spreading of the good news of God revealed in Jesus Christ given a first priority among us?
2. Are we making a serious attempt to understand the biblical concept of the word church, and are we actively involved in spreading this spirit of community in our mission outreach?

3. Are we trying to work out a strategy of mission appropriate to the biblical mandate, or are we just trying to use whatever model seems popular for the time?

4. Am I a member of a Church where the emphasis is put on programs and not people?

When one begins asking questions such as these, one will begin the process that leads to genuine growth.

God is constantly involved in breaking down the barriers that are set up. Any barriers that go against God's goal of building a new homogeneous unit of people from every nation, race and people must be dissolved.

It is in the church of the New Testament that God creates a new family that goes against all barriers of caste, class, and race. And it is when the Spirit of God comes upon His people that they will expand their borders and invite all to come to the supper table. Cho and the Full Gospel Church are a prime example of the power of God and how His church will grow as the people of God remove all barriers that would keep them from taking this gospel to the world. The Japanese were once very cruel dictators in Korean history, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, the people of Full Gospel are training missionaries to continue the spread of the gospel in Japan. The North Koreans are perhaps their most bitter enemies, yet they are praying for the conversion of North Korea and its leadership every day.

When one gathers a people together and presents them with the Word of God and shares with them the possibilities of being used by God, things are going to

happen. The fastest growing churches in the world are churches that have learned the simple truths which point to the New Testament model for church growth.¹ If one were to ask Cho how his church grew to 600,000 members, his answer would not be that it grew because he had enough parking spaces to accommodate the growth patterns of the church. In fact, it is quite interesting that the fastest growing church in the world probably has one of the smallest parking lots in the world. Real church growth that is both quantitative and qualitative in nature must be based on simple biblical truths. The principles of Church Growth in Korea and at the Full Gospel Church in particular are defined in terms of their faithfulness to the biblical model. It is when the principles of Acts are adopted in any place, whether it be in Korea or Kansas City, that church growth occurs spontaneously.

It is most important in this review that one list some direct factors that led to the rapid growth of the Full Gospel Church in Seoul. It would take only one visit to this congregation to clearly understand that they are a people who believe in the power of prayer. It is when they are communicating with God that He gives them clear instructions as to their ministry in their communities. They have a pastor who is a very dedicated and humble individual who has a very strong prayer life which has given birth to his strong sense of faith in God. He is a leader with a vision and he stays close to God in order to keep the ministry running according to God's plan. It is quite disturbing to realize that a man of Dr. Cho's stature is not considered as a church growth theologian. However, he is the greatest practitioner that this writer

¹Vaughan, World's Twenty Largest Churches, 20.

has ever met.

It was in my conversations with him that I realized he really has not been granted respect among the church growth theologians. Maybe this could simply be because his methods are not based upon the modern definitions of church growth as enunciated by Donald McGavran and his colleagues.

As previously stated, the term church growth did not originate in a man's mind but it finds its inception with God. It is God's desire that the church grow and expand her border to the world. However, genuine growth can never take place without the creation of loving communities in the neighborhoods. These communities have been known as house to house groups of Home Cells. Whatever they are called, it is necessary to give support to them because the church is no stronger than its weakest link.

When a people of God pray together and believe on the Holy Spirit, things will begin to happen among them. When they hear the Word of God, their faith will be renewed and strengthened. Since God continues to co-exist in community and fellowship, it should be the very nature of the church to continue to give birth to such biblical structures.

As I reflect over the dozens of times I have been involved in the attempts of pastors to bring change to the church, the first thing I would suggest is that this hard question be asked: "Is it really possible for this particular group of people to change? Should I attempt this?"

There are thousands of churches which should simply be left alone. They are

unable to change, and the attempt is a futile one. People gain their significance from their positions and power bases in church life as readily as they do in business life. To change the system is to threaten their work and self-esteem, often developed at a great price of time invested during years of devotion and sacrifice to a church program. Unless a spiritual explosion occurs in their lives, they won't change.

There are truly devoted pastors who cling to the security blanket of the salary provided by a congregation. Should they risk all for a New Testament concept of church life? That's a question that can be answered only in one's secret chamber of prayer.

Sometimes it's better to just start over. Sometimes it's easier to take a remnant" as Jehovah said He would do within Israel, and start fresh. It's a painful thing to draw people who want to go on with God and leave the rest behind, but that's what God had to do with Israel in the desert. It is a viable option, considered by the believers as they approach the end of the century.

It's always something to be prayed over until the Lord provides the answer should the committed live in frustration because of the traditionalist who hinder the ministry, or should the uncommitted face a new future apart from them?

It is difficult breaking the close ties of love in program oriented churches. Such life changing decisions are made slowly, with much grief, and must be done with love and not bitterness in one's secret prayer room.

The church is the one institution which can preserve the good old days, when nothing else has stayed the same. More and more Christians, when thinking about

their local churches, resist change even though they would not think of driving a 25 year-old car.

There's a good reason for this: all change is perceived as loss. Even when the change is an apparently happy occasion like marriage, or moving to a new job, there remains the lingering feeling we have left something behind, something we'll never recapture.

Christian leaders are change agents, involved in the business of leading people to higher ground with new ministries to the lost.

One needs to change. One needs to move to higher ground. One needs to mature in Christ. One needs to right the wrongs that are out in the world, to change them for the better. In the midst of one's quest, however noble it may be, one needs a deep appreciation of not just how to accomplish the goal, but how to bring about change in a manner that will produce a minimum of distress.

Change only takes place in people when they are discontent. If one is satisfied with the traditional church, why change? If one can find enough people who dislike the same thing, then one has a group with a common goal, namely to get rid of that which one dislikes. The role of the change agent is then to provide a solution to the common felt need. When a pastor calls a community into maturity in Christ, he is creating in them a holy discontent, a discontent with the way they are and a desire to become more than they are.

Resistance to change takes place in the same way. If people are presented with new situations which threaten their comfort zones, their discontent will be aimed

at removing the cause of potential changes. The challenge then is to introduce change in a manner that will encourage people, not discourage them.

The church is apart of the Kingdom for Christ which functions within the kingdoms of this world. As the resident Body of Christ on earth, it has its own lifestyle. It exists to edify its members, to penetrate Satan's kingdom and to bring the power of Christ into direct encounter with the power of Satan.

It's a brutal but true fact: most churches have become just one more of the kingdoms of this world. One shall not deny they have a proper theology, but their ecclesiology violates the clear teaching of our Lord, and Satan gleefully imprisons them in their own kingdom structure.

However, it is the power of the Gospel that dispels all false principles of community and sets forth God's plan for building a kingdom that accepts all of God's people.

Too long have we lacked a clear vision of the concept of the word church and what it really means, it mostly means the people, clergy and laity. The people have suffered enough from the notion that the clergy should be a class apart. To many, the laity is considered as an audience before whom the clergy performs. We are as much victims of being spectators in religion as we are in sports. Our task is to get people out of the stands and on the fields. Church leaders must convince them that all church members are the team.

Our task is to rediscover a way by which all Christians, lay and clergy alike, may see themselves as ministers of Jesus Christ. If this idea were taken seriously by

our people, we would find ourselves with a spiritual revolution on our hands. I have tried to attempt in a very humble way a possible alternative. This alternative known as Home Cells is as old as the New Testament church and, if practiced in our congregations today, would reveal to our people the secret of real church growth.

APPENDIX A

**A Sample Syllabus of the Ephesus Seventh-Day
Adventist Church's Home Cell Program**

by

Craig Arthur Dossman, Sr.

The Problem:

Satan is now seeking to hold God's people in a state of inactivity, to keep them from acting their part in spreading the truth, that they may be weighed in the balances and found wanting. (White, Christian Service, p. 37.)

The reason why God's people are not spiritually minded, and have no more faith, I have been shown, is because they are narrowed up with selfishness. . . . It is not the abundance of your meetings that God accepts. It is not the numerous prayers, but the right-doing, doing the right thing, and at the right time. (White, Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 36.)

My heart is pained when I think how little our churches sense their solemn accountabilities to God. It is not ministers alone who are soldiers, but every man and woman who has enlisted in Christ's army: Are they willing to receive a soldiers fare, just as Christ has given them an example in His life of self-denial and sacrifice? Have our churches as a whole manifested that self-denial? They may have given donations in money, but they have withheld themselves. (White, Christian Service, p. 35.)

Many of the professed followers of Christ feel no more burden for souls than does the world. The lust of the eye, and the pride of life, the love of display, the love of ease, separate the professed Christians from God. The missionary spirit, in reality exist in but a few. What can be done to open the yes of these sinners in Zion, and make hypocrites tremble? (White, Christian Service, p. 36.)

God's people must take warning and discern the signs of the times. The signs

who professes the truth should be a living preacher. God calls upon all, both preachers and people, to awake. All heaven is astir. The scenes of earth's history are fast closing. We are amid the perils of the last days. Greater perils are before us, and yet we are not awake. This lack of activity and earnestness in the cause of God is dreadful. This death stupor is from Satan. (White, Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 260-61.)

Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul stirring truths, but they have not put them into practice; while making a profession, they deny the power of godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them. They are unfitting themselves to be members of His family. (White, Testimonies, Vol. 6, pp. 426-27.)

Solution

In every church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ. (White, Christian Service, p. 61.) "In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were Healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great days of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the Truth. The world seemed to be

lightened with the heavenly influence." (White, Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 126.)

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with Holy Consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from Heaven. . . . Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow them." (White, The Great Controversy, p. 612.)

"This House-to-House labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep is the most essential work that can be done." (White, Evangelism, p. 431.)

"Our Savior went from House-to-House healing sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to disconsolate." (White, Christian Service, p. 253.)

The work of God in the earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their effort with those of the ministers and church offices." (White, Gospel Workers, p. 352.)

God expects personal service from everyone to whom He has intrusted a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods. (White, Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 30.)

He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the Lost. (White, Ministry of Healing, p. 105.)

The Lord holds the church responsible for the souls of those whom they might be the means of saving." (White, Christian Service, p. 13.)

The Plan:

"Back to the Bible. . . . This is the only Formula for Revival." The Lord impressed me in my private devotion that unless I got back into the Bible, my church would continue to be a "House of entertainment" and not a "House of Prayer" and evangelism reaching out into the community. I was frustrated with a ministry that saw the Pastor as the Coach and player of the whole team at the same time. I asked myself the question, Is this God's plan for his Church in these last days? Of course, I realized that this was not the New Testament church's model for evangelism.

What was the N.T. Model for Evangelism

The Lord in prayer impressed me that I should, "Help my members to stand on their own feet." Help them to carry out ministry. That made me really begin to search the Scriptures. I came to Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, and that gave me courage because Ephesus just happens to be the name of our church. In Ephesians 4:11 it said that God "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (NIV).

Then I saw it. God's servants (apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers) are given to the Church to equip the laity, so the laity can carry out ministry, both inside and outside of the church.

I continued my study in the book of Acts 2:46-47, and there I found that there were two types of meetings in the early church. Not only did the disciples gather regularly at the Temple, but they also met together daily in their homes to break

bread and to have fellowship.

Until then, my idea of the church was always a public building; I had never even considered the possibility of turning a house into a church. Dynamite!!

And I thought to myself, here I have been stressing for over 12 years of ministry only a temple (church) ministry. We have no house-to-house ministry. I've just been telling my people to come to church on Sabbaths and Wednesdays. There was something we had been lacking.

As I continued my study in the book of Acts, I saw that in addition to the 3,000 people added to the church on Pentecost, 5,000 more were added the following day. Yet there were only twelve apostles and seven deacons. Therefore, the only way for the believers to be taken care of in the house meetings was for each of those fellowships to have a leader. The church, then, was well-organized to minister to the needs of the growing congregation. "Thank you Jesus!" I said to myself. It made sense. How else could the early church have absorbed 3,000 converts on the first day when the Holy Spirit fell on the believers in the Upper Room on Pentecost? The needs of those people were taken care of in the homes, not in the temple.

N.T. Teaches Two Types of Meetings

As I continued to study, I saw that other churches were mentioned as meeting in houses, the church in the house of Lydia (Acts 16:40), the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquilla (Rom. 16:3-5) and the church in the house of Philemon (Chap. 2) Clearly there was much scriptural support for home meetings.

Next I was drawn to the Old Testament in Exod. 18:21-22 where Jethro told

moses to delegate his authority through the leadership of "trustworthy men".

I then began to see the importance of delegation of authority in carrying out the will of God. Gradually the thought came into my mind: If you would let your people go during the week, your church would grow on the Sabbath. "Lord, this is your will," I prayed. How can they (the church members) function any other way than your way and meet with success? I immediately made up in my mind that if I wanted to experience real growth in my church, then I would have to get back to the N.T. Bible basics. I would have to release my people on Wednesday nights so that they could make little churches in the communities in their homes. As a child growing up we use to sing the song, "brighten the corner where you are!" If this song was going to ever be a reality in the church . . . the church would have to reach out to those in need through ministry.

From Concept to Reality:

After praying ova the concept, I asked the Lord to give me guidance on how to set up this powerful ministry of House-to-house evangelism. I knew that in order to get it to function properly. I needed the blessings of God and the support of my leadership.

Of course, since this program is God's program, I had all the confidence in the world that I was operating within the framework of His will. I know that if I would only humble myself, the Lord would do great things in the life of His church. This meant that I had to bury the concept that it was the preachers responsibility to be the chief soul winner of the church. This concept will put many preachers in their graves prematurely.

It was my desire then to make sure that I understood that my biblical role as a pastor was one of an enabler. I had the responsibility of training and equipping my people for the work of ministry in the church and in the home. Then and only then

could I expect the Lord to pour out His spirit upon my church as we follow faithfully His blueprint in evangelism.

Steps to setting up House-to-House Ministries lot Step-Talk with your Leaders

1st Step - Talk with your leaders

After much fasting and prayer I went to my elders and laid the whole plan before them. I told them that I couldn't carry this program out in full force unless I had their approval and total support. I shared with them the fact that they couldn't carry the load of ministry to the church by themselves. I told them that it would be much better if we trained our leads to carry out ministry among the flock during the week. This would relieve us for more time in the visiting of the sick and for the training of our leaders.

I shared with them the fact that I would be responsible for setting up the program and they would be responsible for seeing that the program be carried out in each of their areas. We realized that we had much work ahead in the planning of the program, but we were willing to make the Sacrifice in light of the great dividends that would lay ahead.

We closed the meeting with prayer and made commitments among ourselves that we would stand together and see this program through until it reached full fruition. We were on our way to growth.

2nd Step - Selecting the right leads is essential

The first thing the pastor should do is to look for men and women who are Spirit filled. If leaders are not dependent upon the Holy Spirit, they can actually destroy everything you try to set up. I would suggest a group of spiritual prayer warriors be set up in the church to pray for the leaders in this House-to-House

ministry. In our church we put a great amount of emphasis in prayer, for prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the response to the character of God. It is an opportunity to commune with God as with a friend. In our prayer life we have learned to talk to God and also listen to him speak to us.

Therefore, on Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. we met in the Upper Room in the church and we asked God to anoint and to set apart the leads of the home fellowship groups. It is very, very, important that your leaders be selected after you have spent much time in fasting and prayer.

Here are some of the qualities I look for in House-to-House leaders:

1. Commitment - They need to be committed to the work of the Lord. In other words they ought to be members who have a burden on their hearts for souls and the work of the Lord. They must be willing to make whatever sacrifice it take to see that man and women have the opportunity to hear the "Good News."
2. Enthusiasm - They must be excited about the prospects of working for the Lord. They must have a personal relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Their enthusiasm must be able to touch the hearts of others and cause them to want to obtain the same attributes of the leader.
3. Testimony - Christians who have a clear, powerful testimony of what God has done for them are living proofs that the gospel does work today. Such Christians bring home to the discouraged a spirit of hope. In other word if the Lord can do it for them . . . He can do it for me.
4. Dedication - They must be faithful church members. In short, they are usually the ones who come to church whenever the

doors are open. These are the faithful few. No matter what happens, these people will "Stand by the Stuff." They ought to be faithful financial supporters of the church. They ought to be enthusiastic supports of the cause of God. Those who are critical of the church in general will discourage themselves and the ones who they are to lead. It is, therefore, very important to solicit spiritual leaders.

5. Spirit-filled - Dependence upon the Holy Spirit is essential if a person is to lead the members of his group. In our church, that means the member must be actively involved in ministry for the Lord already in the church. I believe that the Holy Spirit will never fall upon a group of lazy people. It will only work through those who are out doing their father's business.
6. Powerful Prayer Life - A great group leader must be a person of prayer. They must have time to spend with the great Shepherd of the flock. Prayer is going to be for them a constant companion as they wrestle with God for guidance in doing ministry in their communities. When the people come together each week in the homes, they need a leader who knows how to make contact with God and how to get things done. This is particularly essential in praying for physical and spiritual healing.
7. Time - Last but not least, Leaders must be willing to take the time. In other words, they can't be too busy. They will need time for Prayer and Bible study. The busier a person is, the less time he or she is going to have to listen to and receive

direction from the Holy Spirit. A good leader will be willing to sacrifice his time in order to make God's time supreme.

3rd Step - Training of Leaders

Once the leaders are selected, they need to be trained in leading meetings. First, they must learn from the pastor so that they can pass on the pastor's teaching to the home groups. It is very essential that the teaching at house meetings fit in with the overall program of teaching in the church.

I provide for all my house-to-house leaders the New Life guide Bible lessons. You might decide to use another series. However, the most important thing is to get them all involved in a systematic method of Bible study. I also meet with my leads every Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. in the Upper room in the church. This time is spent in prayer and praise, and we also receive reports from each group leader. This makes a prayer service at church very exciting as we hear how God is using each member to minister to the needs of those in their community.

4th Step - "Divide...and you will Conquer" This is the time that you will need to break down your membership into small groups. I am using groups no larger than twelve however, you may decide to make them larger or smaller. You must operate in the framework of what will fit your church's needs. Perhaps the more pressing question will be one of geography. This should be the deciding factor. That is, there is a defined fellowship group for the area each one lives in, and he or she joins that group. Since spending time together in the work of the Lord is your goal, then geographical proximity is very important. I would suggest that you try to divide your church into various zip codes. For instance, we looked at all our members in zip code 90044 and we found out that we needed more than one group. So we divided them

equally in that zip code group. You might find out that you have only 5 members living in one zip code. Either you could have them work together with an adjacent group, or have them start up where they are and build their fellowship from that five.

Once you have divided them into groups, you should then place your leaders over each group. It would be nice if your leaders lived in the same zip code, but this does not have to be. The important thing is to have a spirit-filled leaders for each group.

Each pastor should try his best to get all of his members involved in home fellowship groups. Believe me, they might not all jump on the band wagon, but once they hear of how the Lord is blessing the program, they will get on board.

After you have completed your list of home Bible fellowships you should list them in the church foyer and announce it before the church. The main goal in this program is to get the maximum participation of the membership.

I have found that when you break your membership up into small groups you get greater participation and input from the members. In small groups it is also easier to establish a closer relationship with each member. However, it is very important to be very clear about the goals and objectives of the House-to-House fellowship. This fellowship is set up to be an evangelistic tool of the church. The primary purpose of this group is to serve as a ministry to the community.

The small groups will also serve as a vehicle for carrying out the church's organizational plans and goals. For example: Our church has a goal for the Magazine. Since we have 12 people in a home group, we go to the group leader and give him the goal of raising 3 subscriptions per group member. This means that in a matter of one month, this group leader should be able to report 36 subscriptions.

The small group ministries are effective because it tends to give way to better communication with the people. They are in a home setting, and they are usually

very relaxed and amenable to whatever you have to say regarding the church program. This also gives them an opportunity for keeping in closer touch with the members in the area. The church can only be as strong as its weakest link. It is therefore my desire to see that the entire body of the church is built up to be strong in doing the work of the Lord. It is then very important to set goals for each house-to-house fellowship.

"Order of Service"

Singing of Hymns

Group prayers

Testimonies

Bible Study

Appeals to Accept Christ

Offering

Closing Prayer

Refreshments (Postum, tea, cookies; make it simple)

The group meetings should also be arranged where the members can minister to each other. Members are encouraged to share their prayer needs so all can prayer for them. We are all involved in a prayer ministry at our church and the members have been adequately trained on how to go before the Lord in prayers in intercession for those in need. This has been one of the most dynamic tools of the evangelistic outreach of our church. We have taken 2 Chronicles 7:14 as our theme text and we believe that God will do great things in and through us as we come together in one accord and pray. We are also praying daily for the spiritual needs of the church along with the physical needs of our membership and those who are on our prayer list

5th Step - The House-to-House meetings are Evangelistic Members are encouraged to look around their neighborhoods for unbelievers they can invite to the meetings. Many of those unbelievers will commit their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ right in the House-to-House meetings. To me, evangelism is essential if home groups are to provide real life for the church

You should also establish statistics to back up the progress of your House-to-House fellowship meetings.

Many of our leaders spend much time in fasting and prayer for the salvation of souls in their neighborhoods. We have set aside Tuesday as our day of fasting and prayer for the leaders as well as the church as a whole.

The success of a good House-to-House ministry depends on the guidance of the pastor, a trained laity, and a continued fellowship with the Holy Spirit in prayer.

6th Step - Motivate your leaders

The pastor and lay leaders need to work as a team. The pastor can't carry the burden of evangelism all by himself, but the laity can take a hold of the program and lead out in seeing it through to glory of God. The pastor can motivate his group leaders in three ways:

1. **Recognition** - You can give them special certificates of recognition for the work that he has done. Let them know that they are special people, and you appreciate their dedicated service to the church.
2. **Praise** - Learn to praise them for their accomplishments publicly. Call them to the front of the church, and let them know how much the church appreciates their dedicated service. I found it is far better to praise a member than it is to fault-find.

When you praise your folk you encourage them. When you fault find you discourage them. When you give them a pat on the back, it's just like saying to a dog, "Sick him boy." Your members would be willing to go that extra mile just to know that they are appreciated. Praising is the best way of motivating, even in Christian work. I try my best to praise people in our church -- leaders under me, the elders, the deacons, and deaconesses, and all group leaders. Anytime any of my leads makes an accomplishment, I try my best to let them know that I appreciate their service and most of all, God is pleased. This small gesture will be one of your greatest acts of motivating your leaders.

3. Love - To motivate people they need to know that they are loved. Everybody needs, to be loved. People really respond to genuine love. A man will break his back for a woman if he knows he is genuinely loved and appreciated. A wife will go that extra mile for her husband when she knows she is appreciated. Burdens are made light when love is the motivating factor of all our actions. Of course, the love of Christ on Calvary should be the main factor of all our responses to Him.

Preachers, love your people. Love them when they are good. Love them when they are bad. Love them because God gave them to you. Love them when they cause you to go into your secret closet in special prayer for them. Love them with the same love that God loves you with--Agape Love--love that will only seek the good in a person and not magnify the bad.

When you motivate your people through: (1) Recognition, (2) Praise, and (3) Love, they will be willing to work together with you in the marvelous work of leading lost men and women to the cross of Calvary.

In a world where we often take each other for granted, it is good that we just take a little time and say, "Thank you," or "I love You," or "I just thank the Lord for you."

Many people can organize, and they can organize beautifully. But an organization, no matter how beautifully it is put together, is not going to work properly if the people in it are not properly motivated to do the work.

If the pastor really takes charge of the home fellowship groups; if he takes an active part in organizing them, and if he trains the leadership and constantly motivates them, the people are going to be on fire. They will see that it's important. They will work hard to do a good job.

Then the home groups will succeed and the church will really begin to grow in the name of the Lord.

Pastors, if you will let your members go and grow for the Lord, you will have a ministry that will be filled with Holy Ghost power. People will come to your church because you have a program that is reaching in to the homes of your people and throughout the community.

In conclusion, the Lord showed me that we are to set goals when it comes to evangelism. When we pray, we are to ask the Lord for what we want. We need to be specific in our prayers and the Lord will give us specific answers. I give praise to the Lord for all of the specific requests that He has answered regarding my church. I told the Lord that if he would be with me I would let my people go in His name to evangelize the city of Lost Angeles. I know the Lord will be with me, because I desire only to glorify His name.

Therefore, brethren set goals! If you don't ask of Him, how can He give it to you? How can your faith be put to a test? Stop shooting arrows in the sky and go before the Lord with your specific plans and goals. Ask Him to do great things in your church. Be still, and in your church you will see the glory of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit wants to communicate with us, but if we don't have dreams and visions, He can't communicate with u.s

Seven Secrets of Success

1. Is it the will of God? (The Bible Fellowship)
2. Do you have a clear cut goal for your church?
3. Have you conceived it, possessed it, in your mind?
4. Do you really believe you can accomplish it?
5. Do you have the enthusiastic support of your people?
6. Have you counted up the cost?
7. Do it! Do it NOW! Don't Delay! The Lord is going to bless you in a mighty way as you use the blue print of evangelism in House-to-House evangelism.

7th Step - The District Leader

District leaders are provided to promote the success of the various House-to-House Groups. Since the group leaders will be involved in teaching and leading of the group, someone is needed to oversee the ministry of the various groups, and to also provide helpful direction where needed.

District leaders will visit a different home group in their district each week. In this way the district leader will keep the pastor abreast of the progress of each group assigned to them.

I have found it very beneficial to have my Elders, where possible, serve as District leaders.

The district leader will fulfill his/her responsibility as follows:

1. Participation at the group meetings. You are to be present to observe and not to lead out. The group leader is always the director of the group and not the district leader.
2. Complete your report regarding offerings collected in the homes.
3. Discuss ways to encourage, motivate and strengthen the ministry of the group leader at the weekly meeting on Sunday morning.
4. Report destructive elements/persons in group meetings (follow Matt. 18-15-18.)
5. Attend Sunday sessions with the Group leader and the Pastor.
6. Turn in the offering taken up during the mid-week on Sabbath morning. Put your offering in an envelope along with the amount and group number.
7. Encourage your group leaders to support the programs of the church.
8. Watching out for formulation of cliques within the Bible groups. This group is not to function as a mid-week group of party-goers.
9. Beware of Little Kingdoms: Discourage the spirit of Competition. Each group is an integral part of the congregation. Their task is to make the whole body strong.

Guidelines for Group Leaders:

1. Make sure you are prepared to make an exciting presentation of your Bible lessons.
2. Encourage your class members to be on time and most of all start each meeting on time.
3. Don't allow any one group member to dominate the meeting by talking too much.
4. Always keep in clear focus the objectives and goals of the Bible fellowship. These objectives and goals will be presented by the Pastor and district leaders.
5. Always encourage group discussions as a teaching tool. Do not make these gatherings a mini-preaching service.
6. Whenever a member of your Bible group is absent call them immediately the following day.
7. Collect the mid-week offering and turn it over to your district leader.
8. Encourage your Bible fellowship to invite their friends and neighbors to the meeting.
9. Keep your meetings to a one hour presentation. You should be able to do this without a problem. It is your responsibility to control the time limit in the meeting.
10. The aim of the Bible group is to put people at ease and to unite them.
11. Get commitments from your group to be faithful to the fellowship. Make commitments to pray for each other.

SETTING UP SMALL GROUP

- A. **Start a Pilot Project** After much prayer and study, begin to organize a small group in your church after you have attended a training session on small group ministries.
- B. **Recruitment - Proceed** to recruit additional people for this ministry.
- C. **Work Together - Incorporate** both Laity and Pastor in the developmental stages of putting your specific ministry together. I am convinced that God is calling every church to open its ministry of pastoring to lay people. Wherever the Clergy and laity are willing to work together for the finishing of the Lord's work, you will see success. It is as Thomas Gillespie says:
 "This pastoring will be realized only if the non-clergy are willing to move up, if 131 of the clergy are willing to move over, and if all of God's people are willing to move out. "
- D. **Preach a series of sermons** on small group ministries/laity involvement.
- E. **Communicate** via church newsletter and pastoral letters.
- F. **Share your actions, vision and plans** with your people and invite them to be with you in action and spirit.
- G. **Hold special prayer seminars and workshop weekends** to teach and train the people.
- H. **Show videos and provide selected books** which deal with lay involvement in ministry.
- I. **Observe members who are already involved** in some type of small group ministry and solicit their support. These people are possibilities for your Ministry Group.

THREE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES IN SETTING UP SMALL GROUPS

Phase I: Development - Putting the ministry together.

This is a continuous stage. From doing the ministry you learn what needs to be changed, what is working, what is not working and why.

Phase II: Implementation - Getting it off the ground Implementation is continuous. Some small group leaders will drop out and need to be replaced. New members will require additional small group leaders.

Phase III: Maintenance - Continuous

This is necessary in dealing with problems that might arise. It is also important to bring your Lay leaders together regularly for encouragement, fellowship, equipping, evaluating and supervision.

I expect all my small group leaders to commit themselves to four very important principles in being a small group leader.

1. They must pray for their ministry regularly.
2. They must be available to those whom they are called to serve.
3. They must contact their small flock on a regular basis.
4. They must provide a Christian example at all times.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS

1. Commitment to Jesus Christ
2. A deep desire to be a lay minister
3. Indications of having pastoral gifts
4. Adequately equipped (attend seminar)
5. Not overloaded with other ministries or responsibilities
6. Be yourself
7. Be human
8. Know what you are doing

9. Be dependable
10. Know your limitations
11. Forgive yourself
12. Confidentiality

BENEFITS OF A SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

1. Intimacy
2. Deepening relationship with a few
3. High support
4. Accountability
5. Discussion
6. Sharing of personal lives
7. Sense of togetherness
8. Helps build a stronger sense of community
9. Nurture
10. Evangelism
11. Compassion
12. Develops a spirit of service & servitude
13. Inner sense of fulfillment

CHECK LIST FOR STARTING A SMALL GROUP

1. Gain the approval of your Pastor or board.
2. Decide whether the group will be open or closed:
 - a. Open group - visitors and new members always welcome.
 - b. Closed group - membership by invitation only.
3. Set your beginning date.
4. Set the term of your small group. How many months will your small group commit to one another?

5. Decide which Small Group Commitments to propose to the group.

SMALL GROUP COMMITMENTS

- A. **Priority** - Every person will be at the meeting unless prevented by illness or other significant reasons.
 - B. **Punctuality** - The group begins and ends on time.
 - C. **Confidentiality** - This is crucial. What a person says in confidence is shared in trust. Broken confidentiality is the fastest way to destroy unity, relationships and ministry.
 - D. **Prayer** - Pray regularly for the group and for each person in the group by name. Choose prayer partners and pray with each other daily over the phone for your small group ministry.
 - E. **Bible Study** - Every person will be involved in a systematic series of Bible Studies with a friend.
 - F. **Affirmation** - A person who opens up and shares something personal and is then laughed at, ridiculed or criticized may never open up again.
 - G. **Love** - We will care for each other like Christ cares for us. In short, our Love will be given with absolutely no strings attached.
6. Write out your order of service.
 7. Choose the material you will be studying—which book of Bible or prophetic books.
 8. Invite seven to twelve people through personal contact.
 10. Commit yourself to this ministry.

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APPENDIX B

**A 10-year Statistical Report for
The Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church**

Presented by

**The Pacific Union Conference of
Seventh-day Adventist Churches
Westlake Village, California**

Pacific Union Conference
STATISTICAL REPORT FOR EPHESUS SDA CHURCH
 Covering the Period January 1, 1980 through December 31, 1990

Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church
 7005 South Western Avenue
 Los Angeles, California 90047

Post Office Box 470639
 Los Angeles, California 90047
 213-971-1514

Year	January 1 Members	Added by –			Total	Dropped by –				Total	December 31 Members
		Ba	Fa	Le		Le	De	Ap	Mi		
1980 *	0	66	0	102	168	-1	0	-1	0	-2	166
1981 **	0	18	0	197	215	-12	-3	0	0	-15	200
1982	200	72	0	13	85	-8	0	0	0	-8	277
1983	277	15	0	43	58	-12	-1	0	0	-13	322
1984	322	35	0	16	51	-13	-1	0	0	-14	359
1985	359	21	0	10	31	-21	-1	0	0	-22	368
1986	368	53	2	20	75	-22	0	0	0	-22	421
1987	421	95	1	11	107	-14	-2	0	0	-16	512
1988	512	31	15	27	73	-27	-1	0	0	-28	557
1989	557	163	2	28	193	-11	-3	0	-1	-15	735
1990	735	47	2	45	94	-24	-1	-1	0	-26	803
TOTALS		550	22	410	982	-164	-13	-1	-1	-179	803

* Ephesus became a company effective 5-31-80

** Ephesus became a church effective 1-10-81

WPCUPB001

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